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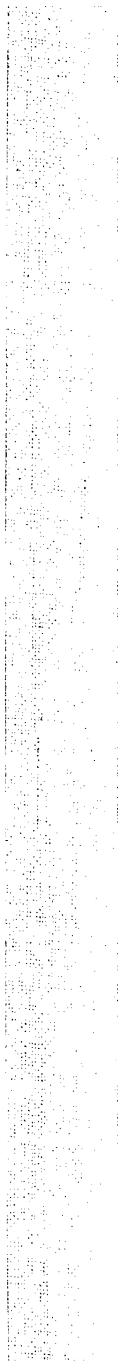
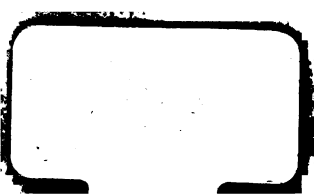
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**“PÒILU”**  
***A Dog of Roubaix***

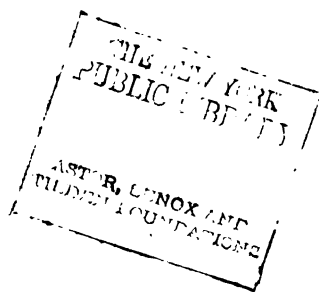


**BOOKS BY  
ELEANOR ATKINSON**

**"POILU"—A Dog of ROUBAIX  
HEARTS UNDAUNTED  
JOHNNY APPLESEED  
GREYFRIARS BOBBY**

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**HARPER & BROTHERS, NEW YORK**  
**[ESTABLISHED 1817]**





*Poilu and his mistress*

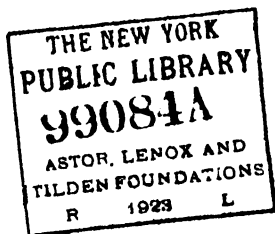
**"POILU"**  
**A DOG OF ROUBAIX**

*by*  
*(St. Louis, Mo.)*  
**ELEANOR ATKINSON**  
*Author of "JOHNNY APPLESEED"*  
*"GREYFRIARS BOBBY" ETC.*



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**"POLU"—A DOG OF ROUBAIX**

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**"POILU"**  
***A Dog of Roubaix***

**CHAPTER I**

**POILU AND HIS FRIENDS**

**I**N the twenty years of her married life Madame Daulac had never invested so many hard-earned francs, without first consulting her husband, as when she bought a puppy in the market of Roubaix. But there was an emergency, and monsieur was away from home attending the autumn maneuvers of the Territorials, a duty which every French reservist owes to *la patrie*. And then, his opinion in the matter would not have been worth a sou. A wool-sorter in a famous carpet factory, he knew nothing about dogs, while madame's knowledge was that of a professional.



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ing of the market, madame furled the big gay umbrella which served as a canopy over her small stand, gathered up her milk-can and baskets, roused her dog, who lay asleep between the dropped shafts, and started for home with her animated little purchase. She never stopped a moment for gossip, nor spent a sou for chiffons in the booths under the arcade. Idleness and extravagance were diversions that she was entirely willing to leave to the *bourgeoise*. To save her dog as much as possible, she walked beside the cart with the reins over her arm. Her knitting-needles clicked briskly and her clean wooden sabots clattered on the cobbles of the deserted streets. At that hour most of the hundred and fifty thousand people of the modern industrial city of Roubaix, which boasts no historic monuments or interesting bits of Gothic architecture, were in the factories, schools, and markets. The bustle in the numerous cafés was in preparation for the midday rush of custom. They, as well as the shuttered houses, sleepy shops, and empty squares, waited for the noon whistles.

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Since he had no load to pull, madame urged her dog into a jog-trot. She had an afternoon's work to do in the field with *grandpère*, to get her crop of beets harvested and ready for the wagons from the sugar factory. She was a large, wholesome-looking peasant woman, still a year or so under forty, in a short, full gown of blue serge, a white linen cap, and a brightly colored neckerchief. In public her manner was marked by a polite reserve, a genial hardness, and her heart never got the better of her shrewd head. But in her home she was all affection, sacrifice, and devotion. Behind the closed door of her century-old farm-house she talked freely and shared all her droll and happy experiences.

Here, indeed, was something to share. The very sight of the clumsy little bundle of white-splashed, tawny wool that persisted in futile efforts to scramble up out of a deep vegetable-basket in the cart filled madame with a pleasurable excitement. The frugal French peasant permits himself few diversions that cost money, and this *petit chien* would furnish

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him understand that he was to follow her to the house. Then she called Gabriel Daulac, who had been "*grandpère*" since the birth of Jeanne Marie, seventeen years before. It would be such a pleasure to the old man to see the greedy little animal dispose of a basin of warm milk and rye bread.

"Come, *mon grandpère*, and see the little dog. He is so amusing."

Although a white-mustached veteran of the war of 1870, Gabriel Daulac was of such a slight and wiry build that he ran like any boy, and kicked off his muddy sabots at the door of the stone-flagged kitchen. Quick of motion and fairly electric with vivacity, he whistled *La Marseillaise* and capered about, beating a tattoo on the hearth with his felt-slippered feet. But that sober puppy was not to be intrigued into a frolic. He attended strictly to the business of licking the dish clean; and when he had finished he sat back on his haunches and regarded this levity with such grave brown eyes that the merry little old man doubled up with laughter.

"The *petit chien* is a true Fleming, Julie—neither ornamental nor light-minded."

## **"POILU" AND HIS FRIENDS**

*"Ma foi!* I should hope not, indeed! He would be of no use to me." Madame's gesture was eloquent. "But you can see that he is of a politeness, prompt with his '*merci,*'" for the puppy had wagged his tail for thanks before he turned around and around, like one of his wild ancestors making a bed for himself in jungle grass, and curled up in a woolly ball in the chimney-corner. He had no curiosity about his new quarters, nor any desire to go exploring. Without waste of time or energy he went to sleep.

"One frivolous person in the family is sufficient," madame said, with an indulgent smile, as she put a loaf on the bare, scoured table and filled two bowls with cabbage soup for their second breakfast. She was much attached to this excitable Alsatian whom the fortunes of war had so strangely made the father of her half-Flemish husband, and proud of the keen mind and wide knowledge of affairs which gave him distinction among his duller neighbors. She was grateful, too, for the fact that his transmitted qualities equipped her children the better to hold their own in a keenly

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competitive world; but, a placid woman of the Nord, she never could understand the extravagant moods and passionate convictions of his ardent temperament.

In the prideful days of the Second Empire Gabriel Daulac had been the proprietor of an inherited inn, in a picturesque hamlet on the route of tourist travel near Strasbourg. Uprooted by the whirlwind of war, he had escaped from the field of Sedan into Flanders. His mother, flying from their burning house to the fortress, had perished with the younger children in the bombardment. His family destroyed, himself ruined and driven into exile, he had married the daughter of the Flemish peasant who had fed and sheltered him.

No one had ever heard a word of complaint from him, for the French bear their misfortunes with fortitude. And he had resources within himself, and a purpose to keep the valiant spirit of France alive. A member of the League of Patriots, he had been made the *appariteur*, or town crier, of his village, and of a stretch of the canal and neighboring shops, yards, and mills. Whenever there was a notice of election or

## “POILU” AND HIS FRIENDS

official order to be announced, he marched over his route, calling the people to their doors by beating a drum that he had found beside a drummer boy when he had helped bury the dead left on the fields of Picardy. He lived in the hope that one day the order for *la mobilisation* would come to him in a little yellow telegram from the Minister of War in Paris.

On every pleasant Sunday afternoon he gathered an audience of farmers, miners, factory workers, and bargemen on the canal-bank. There he read a newspaper aloud and explained such complicated matters as the *affaire Dreyfus* and the Agadir incident. And over and over again, in fiery speech and vivid gesture, he told the story of the *débâcle* and of the robbery and humiliation of France. But he might as well have talked to the cows. The forty-year-old war had left the Nord unscathed at the time, and it would have been forgotten in many a village but for some such fighting-cock of a little old patriot. And so, his was a voice crying in a wilderness of disbelief that the enemy was plotting to strike again. To Gabriel

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Daulac it was a tragic thing that the only impression he was able to make upon his neighbors was to win for himself the humorous nickname of *M. la Revanche*.

The family circle was incomplete on the evening of the October day of 1912 when madame brought the puppy home. Monsieur was expected, but not before morning; and Jeanne Marie, having taken her *brevet simple* in the National School, was in a convent at Lille, learning fine needlework to fit herself for employment in a lingerie-shop in the Rue République of Roubaix. There was only Victor, the ten-year-old son, to come home from a *lycée* at dusk, neatly smocked and hatted in black, and with his books in a smart, military-looking knapsack of glazed leather. The little dog was the center of attraction of a merry group before the open fire when monsieur burst into the room, rather boisterously, so happy was he to be at home again after his rough month in camp. A name had been under discussion, but only *grandpère* was quick-witted enough to see the comical resemblance between the puppy and the

## “POILU” AND HIS FRIENDS

master. They were both all unkempt hair and ravenous appetite.

“*Voilà!*” he cried, and he then and there christened the little dog Poilu for this hairy soldier. Every one laughed delightedly, and kissed one another on both cheeks. The matter of a name being settled, madame considered her husband’s demand for a very large, very hot dinner on the instant. His appearance in her spotless house was a scandal.

“But, Henri, you will wash and shave your face first, and put on a clean smock, my friend,” madame assured him, and she pushed him into a tiny lavatory at the rear. It was plain to be seen who was ruler in that well-ordered house, and monsieur had the conviction that he was a lucky fellow to have such a capable wife to manage him and his affairs. She had bread and *vin ordinaire*, a cabbage salad, and a stewed rabbit, on the table by the time he reappeared in the long, incredibly patched and starched, blue smock of the French working-man. Big and blond, he looked like a huge, good-tempered baby in a pinafore, but he had less



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to say than many an infant in arms. Old Gabriel sat quivering with exasperation until he nearly exploded.

“Well, well, my son, what news of the army?”

Monsieur turned to stare at his father in mild surprise. “There is nothing new, *mon père*. The army is always ready to defend *la patrie*.”

“Defend! *Nom du diable!* Are we never to rescue Alsace-Lorraine and avenge the Peace of Paris?”

Monsieur shook his head. His father suffered, and for that he was sorry. He himself understood clearly that this was another day and that republics did not provoke war; but he could not argue, and it was, indeed, the constant concern of the family to divert the mind of the old man from his obsession. “*Món père*, I have brought you the Paris papers.” He had bought the *Petit Journal*, and begged the others of reservists on the train. Now he directed Victor to get them from the pockets of his military greatcoat.

Madame hastened to light the oil-lamp and to find the steel-rimmed spectacles,

## “POILU” AND HIS FRIENDS

and the little boy to push up the straight-backed chair on which his grandfather preferred to sit astride, so that he could spread the opened sheets on the table, between his elbows. Instantly absorbed, he made his way through a maze of print, scenting out matters of interest with the certainty of a hunting-dog on the trail of game. A mind less alert to the significant would have missed an item that was squeezed into a small space under theater advertisements, as though it were of no importance. With suspended breath and dilated eyes he hung over it a moment; then he uttered a cry as of one mortally hurt.

“*Bon Dieu!* What is this? The fortress of Lille is to be dismantled—abandoned. The Minister of War says it has not been needed here since the battles of Napoleon in Flanders. Imbecile! He talks of saving taxes! Liberty a matter of sous! This infamous government opens a gate to Paris and the Channel ports to the enemy.”

“But, *mon père*, Belgium protects this frontier. Even the Prussians cannot cross a neutral state.”

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“What is to stop the assassins? Honor? Humanity?” He laughed in bitter derision. “Behold! This is how they will come, to ‘affright and desolate the land.’” Slipping into his sabots, he stamped across the room in the goose-step. The solid little stone house with its low, heavily beamed ceiling echoed to that brutal, insolent tread.

Exhausted by his own violence, he dropped into his armed chair by the fire. Madame had a remedy for these crises of the nerves that set his old heart to racing so alarmingly; but he pushed the cup away and declared his intention of taking his drum and arousing the village. He would make a pilgrimage to awaken the citizens of the Nord—of France—to their peril.

“No, poor *grandpère*, you would not want to call people to their doors to laugh at you.” Madame hovered over him with the compassion of a Madonna. He submitted then to her ministrations, like any child. Victor sat on the floor, pressing his grandfather’s shaking hand to his own smooth, wet cheek. Monsieur was less

## “POILU” AND HIS FRIENDS

quick, but no less distressed and anxious to divert his father from these shattering thoughts. In his need he was inspired.

“There was a reservist from Soissons in camp, *mon père*, who had a little dog. He was half terrier, like the shippercke of the canal-boats, and could perform clever tricks. These Matins are of a stupidity except about their work, but let us see now. Something might be done with one so young. Poilu!” He pulled the clumsy little animal, who looked like an infant St. Bernard, up by the fore paws, and fixed him with an earnest eye. “*Petit chien*, thou art dead.” He turned the little dog on his side and stretched his head and legs until he lay flat. “Thou art dead!” he insisted. But the puppy refused to believe it. He twisted and struggled to his feet, and lifted brown eyes of such puzzled inquiry that one could imagine the wrinkles in his forehead.

The Fleming may be slow, but he is of a dogged determination. For an hour monsieur persisted. *Grandpère* and Victor were on their toes with excitement; madame dropped her knitting; and even the

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old dog forgot his ancient grudge and lifted his head to watch that duel of wit and will. Again and again the man repeated, "Thou art dead!" and forced the little dog to the floor. The idea that there might be some connection between these cabalistic words and the action penetrated his mind at last. Willing to oblige when he understood what was expected of him, he suddenly agreed: "All right, monsieur, I am dead!" He dropped as though he had been shot, and not until bidden did he jump up and wag his tail with pride. He, too, was a slow Fleming, but a lesson once learned was never forgotten.

Monsieur wiped the sweat from his brow. A day of wool-sorting would have tired him less. Madame rescued her property from the caresses of *grandpère* and Victor. "Enough! I cannot have the dog spoiled for his work by so much petting." She took one of the brass candlesticks from the row on the chimney-shelf, lighted the taper, and sent them off up-stairs to the small chamber which they shared, under the slope of the gable.

## “POILU” AND HIS FRIENDS

People who are obliged to be up at four o'clock in the morning must be abed early. Monsieur sat by the dying fire only long enough to smoke a pipe, and madame to round the toe of a stocking. Few words were needed to express their mutual understanding and contentment, and for the most part the only sounds in the thick-walled room were the comfortable ticking of the clock and the falling of clinkers from the small coal-grate that was set between polished ovens in the massive fireplace. There was a dutiful letter from the absent daughter to be read. Jeanne Marie would be home in the spring. Then a good husband in the skilled-artisan class must be found for her, and a small business bought with the *dot* of three thousand francs that had been accumulating in a Roubaix bank since the year of her birth. Quick-witted and vivacious like *grandpère*, and an artiste of the needle, Jeanne Marie would preside over an exclusive little lingerie-shop and reckon her profits on a cash-register with distinction.

The French plan the lives of their

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families far ahead, and no important matter is left to chance. Victor was to finish at the *lycée*, and serve an apprenticeship in the chemical works at Lille, before the time arrived for his two years of military training. As for monsieur, he was forty-one, at which age he passed automatically into the Territorial Reserves, or Home Guard. Years of uninterrupted work could now be devoted to the laying up of *gros sous* for old age.

“And we shall have *les enfants* near us always, my friend,” madame said, as she rolled up her knitting. The happy thought was in the minds of both that the feet of grandchildren would patter busily over this old stone floor. The French are not hospitable, and do not entertain the casual guest. But, more than any other people, they have a passion for personal independence, the gift of joy in simple living, and they cherish the tie of family. This ancestral farm-house, and the narrow fields behind it, bounded the world for Monsieur and Madame Daulac. They desired nothing outside of it, and only security from molestation within. And in that

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## **“POILU” AND HIS FRIENDS**

feeling they expressed the feeling of all France.

For so many generations had the common duties of the day been done there that monsieur's winding of the clock was unconscious, like some process of nature. Madame picked up the puppy, and the dog rose and followed her to the stable-yard. A chill rain had begun to fall, and the moonless night should have been dark, but this was a region in which industry never slept. The head-light of a locomotive that was shunting empty freight-cars onto a factory switch illumined the village, and the clamor of the engine bell deafened the ears. The hissing of steam could be heard, the clatter of shoveled coal, the slam of an iron door, and the distant shriek of a whistle. On the canal, a chugging little steamer was pulling a string of coal-barges that were linked together with clanking chains; and over the Lille road rushed continuous streams of pleasure-cars with tooting horns. The glares from head and tail lights, and from opened furnace doors, pierced the darkness; signal lanterns described their arcs of fire,



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and the horizon was marked by pulsing flares where fires under boilers were never permitted to go out.

The old dog knew all these sights and sounds and slept through them undisturbed, and yet could be trusted to awaken at the footfall of an intruder. The puppy must learn to guard the family property, so madame tucked him under a chicken-coop near the dog-house. Taken from his mother and a sociable litter only that morning, and never before left alone, he licked her hand wistfully, but no dog of that brave and loyal breed was ever known to whimper.

When madame returned to the house monsieur had extinguished the lamp and retired to the four-poster and canopied bed of carved French walnut which filled one corner of the large room. That, together with the companion armoire, and the linen-chest between, had been her marriage portion. Such valuable things were bought but once and became heirlooms, as were the copper utensils, the charcoal-stove that was used for cooking in summer, and the pair of shining brass

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milk-cans that were shaped and ornamented like old Greek amphoræ. And long would such a family cherish the delicate, bisque image of the Virgin, which Jeanne Marie had dressed in crimson and blue satin embroidered with gold thread.

Fading and glimmering in the flickering light of a candle, the sad face of the Madonna seemed to regard madame with compassion. Suddenly she heard again *grandpère's* stamping tread and his voice of prophecy. International politics were a mystery to her, but in a way she knew that there were ruthless forces in the world which menaced the peace and the hard-won possessions of simple folk and unoffending nations.

She crossed herself and told the beads of her rosary. When prepared for bed, she took the candle down to blow it out. But after a moment of reflection she set the burning taper before the Virgin and murmured another prayer:

“Mother Mary, guard us and our home.”

## CHAPTER II

### THE HAPPY DAY

**P**OILU shed his superfluous hair with his youth; and except that his noble tail had been docked, so as not to interfere with the harness, he came to look in maturity much like a short-haired St. Bernard or rough-coated Great Dane. But his body was more lithe and rangy than either, his head smaller, his muzzle sharper; and, for all his massive shoulders, bowed fore legs, muscular flanks, and feet that were splayed like those of a Percheron horse, he had the gentle, attentive expression of a collie.

The name that had been bestowed upon him in jest was confirmed by his soldierly qualities. He shirked no task by day, and by night he stood sentinel, sleeping with one heavy-lidded eye on the latch and one leaflike ear sensitive to every alien

## THE HAPPY DAY

sound. And ambitious! "*Ma foi!*" as madame boasted to her family, "the *chien* was born with a marshal's baton in his knapsack." His strength and the stoutness of his heart were so out of proportion to his size and weight that he made nothing of a four-hundred-pound load, nor of trotting with it the whole three miles to the market-square of Roubaix. Upon the death of the old dog, which occurred when Poilu's age was but a year and a half, he took command of the stable-yard, and it was a matter of pride with him to sound the *réveillé* for the village.

After an April of cold rains, May-day morning of 1914 was warm, with a scent of apple and pear blossoms in the air; but such a fog blanketed the earth that Poilu could see nothing when his mellow "Woof! woof! woof!" set all the cocks to crowing. But he heard madame's sabots on the cobbled path from the house and rattled his chain to guide her.

"*Bon jour*, Poilu!" she said, as she stooped to release him. Madame's dog always had his pleasant morning greeting. He rubbed his head against her rough

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gown, expressed all the pleasure and devotion that was possible with his fraction of a tail, and then was off about the first duties of the day. It was business very much to the liking of a lively young dog to get the two cows on their legs, in position for old Gabriel's milking-stool, and to chase the chickens from the poultry-house, the ducks from the pond, and stir up the Belgian rabbits in their hutches, so Victor could properly distribute grain and carrots.

These devoirs paid, Poilu waited upon monsieur, to observe if he would require the services of a four-footed friend in pulling a small cultivator over a field. Seeing that the master was engaged with a spade and a barrow-load of fertilizer, he followed madame. When alone with her dog she had a habit of confiding to him her small satisfactions and difficulties.

"This obscurement of the air is so thick, my friend, that I can scarcely see to pull a radish." That, of course, was a pleasantry, for she herself had tucked every radish, onion, lettuce-head, asparagus-stalk, and spinach-plant into its cozy

## THE HAPPY DAY

forcing-bed under glass, and could have found each tender infant in the dark.

It must have been plain, even to the dog, that something unusual was afoot that morning, for everybody was in a state of happy excitement, and, dropping whatever other work he was doing, helped madame load her little high-sided red cart. Monsieur lifted in the classic milk-can, Victor filled a crate with eggs, *grand-père* tied braces of live chickens, ducks, and rabbits by the feet. And when madame had washed the vegetables, Jeanne Marie ran out and packed them into flat baskets, with as careful attention to form and color as though she were a milliner arranging a show-case. Jeanne Marie then hurried into the house to put the bread, cheese, and coffee on the table, and to fill a basin with warm milk and potatoes for Poilu. It was not from indulgence that the pretty daughter was kept from the rougher tasks. Her mates in the village who were designed by nature to become "merchants of the four seasons" were in the fields. But one whose talent it is to embroider nets and crêpes, and to serve

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customers from behind a counter, must keep her hands smooth and white.

Little time was ever wasted on a meal so light and casual, and it was usually eaten standing; but it was quite unlike so polite a little boy as Victor to bolt his food and, with a “*Pardon, maman,*” to dash from the house and race down the street with other lads to the church. There was not more than time for the others to hurry into clean garments before, at the silvery summons of a bell, every front door in the quaint little village popped open like so many cuckoo-clocks.

Smocked and saboted men and school-children, white-capped market-women, bloused and coiffed demoiselles whose employment was in shops and factories, the infant in arms, and the aged, feeling their infirmities, but valiantly gay that no one need be distressed about it, were all in the turf-bordered muddy lane of a street, exchanging bows, gestures, and merry greetings. It was a clean, well-mannered, self-respecting crowd of peasant proprietors and artisans. Eternally simple and unpretentious, they were dressed suitably for

## THE HAPPY DAY

the rough work to which they must presently return, affecting no cheap and clumsy imitation of the *bourgeois*. But neither did they walk with slouching gait nor touch a forelock to any landlord. Every family had savings in the bank, and no man could evict them from their small, solidly built houses or take any part of the increase of their fields.

The sun had not yet risen, but the fog had lifted and thinned to such a sunny haze that the new-leaving tops of the stripped poplars and the pink-and-white bouquets of the fruit-trees were visible. A few freight-barges were tied to the landing, and now the families upon them, who lived the wandering lives of gipsies on the waterways of France, tumbled out of the deck-houses. Suddenly aware that as pretty a pastoral as was to be seen in the most rustic village was about to be enacted in this factory-girt hamlet, they pushed gang-planks out to the bank. Even the clever and gritty little schipperkes that guarded the canal-boats, always ready to sink their teeth in the shins of an intruder, came ashore amiably, to scrape acquaint-



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ance with the cart-dogs on the tow-path. An idle train-crew, groups of grimy men from night shifts in mills, a peddler in a three-dog cart, the lone gendarme who, with his short saber, varnished belt, buttons, and shoulder-straps, looked more like a soldier than a policeman, and even the jolly German proprietor of the little wine-shop, who was a Protestant, joined the crowd in the street.

At the second ringing of the bell M. le Curé, in gown and stole, appeared in the church door. Followed by acolytes bearing a censer and a vessel of holy water, and by a half-dozen choir-boys chanting a Latin hymn, the priest headed the straggling procession of a hundred and fifty people. Turning at the end of the street, he led the way the length of the farms and up the hedged embankment to the high, white road to Lille, which ran behind all the fields. Then, as the sun dissipated the mist and warmed the air, he scattered holy water abroad, on the green pastures, the freshly turned furrows, and the blossoming fruit-trees.

It was the beautiful ceremonial of

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Blessing the Fields, by which a simple and pious folk have, for uncounted generations, asked *le bon Dieu* to reward their toil with an abundant harvest, and permit them to garner it in peace. When the sun was above the smoky roofs and tall stacks of Roubaix, there was nothing so bright in that gray landscape as the farming villages, with their wet, red gables, emerald pastures dotted with grazing cows, and newly seeded gardens, all nestled in green hedges and bloom. The sweet spring morning wore such an unwonted air of festival that the people were loath to return to their interrupted tasks.

Jeanne Marie was not one to slip in and out of life unnoticed, and her attempt to escape from this crowd of lifelong friends and neighbors had not the smallest chance of success. Among these fair and sturdy people of the Nord, she was of the South, an exotic like her grandfather, all a dark, bright prettiness, slender grace, and sparkling vivacity. Always a popular young person, she was now the center of the liveliest interest, for romantic rumors concerning her were abroad. Until formal

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announcement was made by Madame Daulac, nothing was supposed to be said, but sympathy and affection were not to be repressed. So Jeanne Marie was detained a moment by every one she encountered with a cordial “*Bon jour, mademoiselle!*” and the smile of a friend who shares a delightful secret.

She managed to return these greetings with composure and, in due time, to reach her own door-step. But there she was besieged by a bevy of laughing girls, her intimates of National-School days. Made merry and bold by the rustic *fête*, the demoiselles demanded definite information.

“Is it true, Jeanne Marie, that there is a *M. le prétendu* who would take you away from us?”

Standing on the sill above them, with her back to the door, she flashed a gay challenge: “Ah, but you are such chatter-boxes! You cannot keep a secret.”

But they could! They could, indeed, they protested, breathlessly. She hesitated, for dramatic effect, and then, with a finger of caution on her red lips, confessed:

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"Yes, my friends, it is quite true that I have the beds to make and the house to put in order before I can go to my employment." Backing through the narrowest possible opening, she clapped the door shut in their faces.

They heard her laugh within, like a gleeful child, as she shot the bolt; but only Jeanne Marie saw her blushing confusion in her small dressing-glass.

Her room was a nook tucked under the gable, with a window that overlooked the fields and the Lille road. During all the years of her happy childhood she had watched the seasons come and go, and the busy world rush by on its peaceful business. In its blue-and-white spotlessness of washable paint and cotton, the tiny retreat looked like a nursery, except for the addition of a sewing-machine, and a shelf of books of pastoral verse and the lives of carefully selected saints that she had been permitted to read in the cloistered garden in Lille.

Jeanne Marie cherished this harmless literature as she did her last doll, but she was well aware that real life was another

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affair altogether. She had a level head and a sense of humor, and her year of chaperoned service in the exclusive little lingerie-shop of old Madame Dubois, who meant to retire on her profits when a purchaser could be found, had been both amusing and instructive. She learned the ways in which a good living and something over for the bank was to be made by clever and industrious catering to the vanities of the *bourgeoise*. The day on which she remarked to her mother that so long as there were women in the world there would be a brisk trade in chiffons and cosmetics, Madame Daulac decided that Jeanne Marie could be trusted to manage a shop of her own.

That was not to be thought of until the attractive demoiselle had a proper “Mme.” to put before her name in gilded lettering on a modest plate-glass door. Madame had been keeping her eyes open, and making and encouraging discreet inquiries; but to Jeanne Marie the pretendant to her hand was dropped into the unruffled pool of her life with the disturbing suddenness of a thrown pebble. He was one M.

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Joseph Menard, aged twenty-five, handsome in a small, neat way, of good family and personal repute, well-mannered, and an artist who was employed in the designing department of the great carpet factory in Roubaix.

Jeanne Marie was permitted to observe this brilliant *parti* from under her exaggerated eyelashes, and to say, "Yes, monsieur," and "No, monsieur," to his conventional remarks. She found him a rather agitating young man, but could not consider him with a detached mind, for marriage was the portal that opened on other dazzling prospects: a *dot* of three thousand francs that was to be invested in the purchase of Madame Dubois's shop; the dignity of being addressed as "Madame," and a personal freedom that alternately thrilled her and filled her with alarm.

This was the time-honored way in which such affairs were arranged, and Jeanne Marie submitted dutifully. Besides, she was a brave girl and could bear misfortune with fortitude, and if monsieur should prove amiable, if— She was really much

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like any other young girl, and now that the event approached with swift certainty, her heart fluttered so in her virgin breast that she must needs ignore it and hurry about her work. Quickly and deftly she coiffed her hair and dressed for the street, putting on a fresh white blouse and a black serge skirt. She had stout English boots snugly laced for the walk, but into her work-bag she tucked a pair of frivolous high-heeled slippers to put on in the shop.

By the time she could finish setting the kitchen in order her little brother would be ready to escort her, on his way to the *lycée*. Victor was only twelve, but he took his duty to his pretty sister seriously. Under his chaperonage no stranger had ever dared to stare at her, much less address her. So, carrying her jacket and her blue-straw turban with its jaunty white wing, Jeanne Marie ran down the steep and narrow flight, singing, “Malbrouck has gone away to war.” The large, old room was so ill lighted by small windows set into the thick walls in a day when there was a high tax on glass that it was dim even on this bright morning. She did not

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see her mother until she ran into her arms at the bottom of the steps.

"*Ma fille*, your soldier has come home, his military training finished, and not to amuse himself." Madame Daulac took her daughter into her arms, and kissed the red lips that went a little pale and tremulous. "*Mignonne*, you are not afraid? You do not find M. Menard disagreeable?"

Jeanne Marie dimpled. "One does not find a polite stranger disagreeable." It was said with the demurest drollery, but under that was a wistful tone. Madame could have reassured her that the prospective son-in-law was consumed with ardor. But in France no one speaks to a young girl of love unless, indeed, the fiancé happens to be unscrupulous and has the luck of a moment alone with her. Madame Daulac merely patted Jeanne Marie's shoulder in sympathy. "M. Menard is much attracted, *ma fille*."

At the outer door she turned, unable to conceal her joy and pride. The marriage contract, the reward of her nineteen years of sacrifice and devotion, was to be



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signed that night, and the event must be suitably observed.

“*Ma foi!* but I have ordered such a *gâteau* of the pastry cook in the market as has not been seen in this house since the christening of *le petit Victor*. *Grandpère*, having kept an inn for rich travelers, knows best about the wine.”

“Champagne, two bottles, very dry and *frappé!*” Old Gabriel was as excited as any child over this small, private *fête*. “It was so that we celebrated the betrothal of my sister Suzette, just before the war.”

“Oh, *grandpère*, tell me about my great-aunt Suzette!” Jeanne Marie hung on his arm. With no romance in her own very practical affair, as yet, she thrilled at the hint of a love-story, as dead but as fragrant as dried rose leaves in a jar.

But the volatile old man seemed already to have forgotten that matter. Under the steady gaze of madame’s hazel eyes he became confused, and then irritable. “Fetch the ice out from Roubaix with the cake, Julie, and I will go to Lille on the electric car for the wine. *Oui, oui!* Of a certainty I could order it of the local

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dealer! But I refuse to enter the shop of the German reptile who is here to spy upon and betray his neighbors."

With that he flung himself out of the house, in one of his sudden rages. Madame went, too, and in haste, saying that she was already an hour late. In a moment Jeanne Marie heard her speak to the dog, and she heard the bell-like note with which the proud Poilu led the procession of market-carts from the village.

There was a mystery about the great-aunt Suzette. In his happiest, unguarded moments old Gabriel Daulac spoke of her; but from the most unlikely subject he was liable to break into fierce vituperation of the ancient enemy of France. Alone in the house, Jeanne Marie laid a dark plot. Some day she meant to get *grandpère* into a corner, in the little apartment above the shop in the Rue République, and make him tell her the story. But so many other things happened that she forgot about it, until a day in October when she had a telegram from Paris, and the German, standing in the door of his wine-shop, said a strange, alarming thing to her. Before

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she escaped to Lille in the dog-cart, with Victor lashing Poilu into a gallop, that they might not be overtaken by the thunderous gray torrent which poured over the Lille road, old Gabriel told the tragedy of Suzette.

Such a beautiful, blissful thing happened that night that, as soon as her fiancé was gone with his mother, Jeanne Marie fled to her room to fall on her knees in thankfulness, and to burn a taper before the image of the Virgin. It came at the end of a delightful evening in which M. Joseph Menard, duly admitted to membership in the family, with the aid of a notary, laid himself out to show how charming he could be to every one.

The marriage contract signed, he kissed the hand of mademoiselle, and presented the *corbeille*, just a ring set with a tiny brilliant, and a golden rosary beaded with amethysts. The sugar wreaths and roses on the *gâteau* had been demolished, and healths drunk in the sparkling wine of France. The fiancé had brought his cor-net, for in the years of his military training he had been a musician in his regimental

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band. He would leave it there and on Sunday afternoon would play the overture from "William Tell." *Grandpère* chuckled and called him a gay dog, and even M. Henri saw the joke in time, for every soldier in France knows that the cornetist is the tenor of the *grand opéra militaire*, playing solos in the Place d'Armes. Always young and good-looking, and the proud possessor of a little waxed mustache, he makes a great impression on the ladies.

"That is a calumny," M. Joseph said, with becoming modesty. "A soloist must keep his eyes and his mind on his notes."

Having no music to attend to at the moment, his fine eyes and his disciplined mind were deeply engaged with Jeanne Marie. Madame Daulac and Madame Menard, having discarded their sabots and donned comfortable felt slippers, were busily knitting, and gossiping about the relative attractions and profits of a market-stand in the open and a flower-booth under the arcade. Monsieur was absorbed in endless games of dominoes with the curé; and *grandpère* was lost to the world in a dramatic account of the battle of Auster-

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litz, with Victor and Poilu for audience. It was then that M. Joseph brought out a portfolio of his colored designs that had won prizes in the National School of Industrial Arts in Roubaix, and others that had been reproduced on the loom. As the family board was littered with the feast and surrounded, he spread the drawings under the lamp on Jeanne Marie's small sewing-table at the far end of the room.

"Color comes first, mademoiselle," he explained, "harmony of coloring, then the design. For color an artist must see art galleries, old tapestries, Oriental rugs, and cathedral windows. The rose window of Rheims is the jewel-casket of *le bon Dieu*," he said, reverently. "You have seen the collection of Old Masters in Lille?"

"Yes, monsieur; the sisters conduct their classes, and have us study the faces of the Holy Family and the saints."

Monsieur Joseph smiled. The young thing was delightful in her naïveté. "But you have never seen the color in the robes and draperies. I take my palette and try to get those time-softened tints on canvas.

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Then the chemists experiment in the dye-vats, and every bale of wool takes color differently. It is to despair." His hands and shoulders went up in an eloquent gesture, expressive of the tragedy of a carpet-designer's life. "I have books on color and historic design, mademoiselle."

"Yes, monsieur," Jeanne Marie said, with a faint blush. There was the romantic implication that they were to look at the pictures and read the books together. She sat on the low linen-chest, in the shadow of the armoire, and bent her head over a bit of sewing, while he faced her from a chair, with his back to the room. A throbbing silence fell between them. Monsieur Joseph thought he had never seen anything so charming as the way in which the lamplight fell on Jeanne Marie's chestnut hair and on her white neck where the soft blouse was turned away. He burned so to tell her of his love that he sat twisting the ends of his neat black mustache until, in his confusion, he committed an indiscretion.

"You will like having your own little shop, mademoiselle?" He might as well

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have said: “You will like being married to me, mademoiselle?” Jeanne Marie blushed a rosy red, but there was laughter in her eyes and daring in her low voice:

“Monsieur, I will confide in you. I shall like being able to cross the street to post a letter without a chaperon.”

Their eyes met in a gay understanding, and at once the bars were down. They felt quite comfortable together, even domestic, but the matter might have gone no further but for a diversion created by *grandpère*. Coming to the dénouement of a Napoleon legend, the old man sprang to his feet dramatically and cried out, “The Old Guard dies, but it never surrenders.”

“*Vive la patrie!*” shouted Victor, and the excited dog gave voice to a “Woof! woof! woof!” that echoed from the walls and made every one jump. In the reaction old Gabriel dropped to his chair.

“A boy or a dog is to be moved; but the citizen is indifferent. France surrenders, the spirit dies!”

Monsieur Joseph was on his feet. “Every citizen of France is ready to die for his country. I will wager you a sou,

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monsieur, that I can get every man in this village into the street and shouting his head off for *la patrie*."

"*Ma foi!* Joseph, it is near ten o'clock and the people in their beds!" cried madame. He had been so quiet, so correct, that his *élan* surprised and thrilled them, most of all old Gabriel and Jeanne Marie.

"All the better for the test." His copper coin rang on the table. Seizing his cornet, he ran into the starry night, bare-headed. Every house was tight shut, and most of the small windows dark when that trumpet-call rang out:

*Allons, enfants de la patrie,  
Le jour de gloire est arrivé!*

Curtains were parted, lights turned up, doors flung open. In no other country in the world is there such instant response to the national air as to *La Marseillaise*, in France. The people literally tumbled out of their beds into the dark and muddy lane, and every one joined in the ringing chorus, "To arms! to arms! ye brave." The last note was followed by a salvo of



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*vive la patries*. Then some one laughed, just for pure pleasure. It was indeed a day of *fête* for these toilers. And another called out: “What is it, then? Has *M. la Revanche* a telegram, ordering *la mobilisation?*”

“A wager! A wager!” shouted old Gabriel. “It appears that I am an ancient imbecile who talks too much. This young patriot covers me with confusion and I owe him a sou.” He had not been so happy in many years. When the call came France would be ready!

When the laughter had subsided Madame Daulac announced: “It is the fiancé of Jeanne Marie who is so impulsive, my friends.”

Then every one crowded up to look at the fortunate young man who was to leave the village desolate by carrying Jeanne Marie away to Roubaix. He stood obligingly in the lamplight which streamed from the door, accepting felicitations and promising that, at some future time, he would play all the garrison solos. They were gone, presently, dispersing with the easy manners of any French crowd.

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Joseph Menard was only a wage-earning young man who, in a nation of artists, ranked with the skilled artisans. With Jeanne Marie he belonged to the class which makes and saves the fortune of France. But for this great occasion, which comes but once in a lifetime, he had fetched his peasant mother from Turcoing in a cab, and had ordered it to return for them at ten o'clock. Seeing the horse turn down from the Lille road, Madame Daulac led the way into the house, to help Madame Menard into her outer garments. She thought every one was following her, and, afterward, that *grandpère*, too, had remained behind, for presently they were all out again, to see the guests off.

So it happened that, for this once before her marriage, Jeanne Marie was alone with her impetuous young lover, in the soft spring darkness that was heavy with the fragrance of apple and pear blossoms. As she turned to enter the house he spoke from behind her.

"Mademoiselle, I am perishing of love."

Her breath seemed to hang suspended in that perfumed air. Then she felt the

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warmth of him, near, but not touching.

“*Bel amie*, you are not indifferent?”

“No—no, monsieur.” Her voice was all but inaudible. She did not resist the arm that tightened around her.

“Mother of God, what happiness!” Her face on his breast was a white glimmer in the starlight when he kissed her on the lips.

## CHAPTER III

### THE HONEYMOON

BECAUSE Sunday brings the only hours of leisure in the week to the working-people of France, it was decided that Jeanne Marie's civil marriage should take place at the *Mairie* of Roubaix on the last Saturday in June. Then, with the church bestowing its blessing on the union the next morning, the wedding could be made the occasion of a happy outing for the whole family. Plans for the great day were discussed with the artless delight of unspoiled children to whom pleasures were few.

"If you are married after morning mass, *ma fille*," Madame Daulac suggested, with her unflinching tact and affection, "we could eat the second breakfast in comfort, at home, and then have a long afternoon and evening in Lille. *Grandpère* desires noth-

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ing so much as to go over the old fortifications. Now that the citadel has been dismantled and the garrison withdrawn, it has become a historic monument, like the Cloth Hall at Ypres. It would be such a pleasure to him to explain everything, and to relate tales of the bad old days when wicked Spanish kings made war in Flanders. Afterward there would be time for Joseph to conduct us through the galleries of Old Masters and tell us about the colors. *Ma foi!* To think that one has never observed them! Then we must dine.”

“Oh, *maman*, a picnic supper by the little River Deule, on the great meadow that is used by the linen-mills for a bleaching-field, would be charming,” said Jeanne Marie, eagerly. “That is the only place in the landscape where one may sit on a bit of grass without being stepped upon.”

“It would indeed, dear child, but me, I would not find it amusing to carry a heavy basket about on a holiday.”

Monsieur Henri, who had been engaged in the absorbing task of making Poilu letter perfect in the art of falling dead, took his pipe from his mouth for one of his rare

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contributions to a conversation: "We shall dine properly, Julie, in the courtyard of that old *auberge* near the market, where you and I had our wedding-dinner."

"I should think so indeed, my friend," madame agreed, in pleased surprise. That was twenty-two years before, and it was only to be expected that a man would have forgotten it. "If the same jolly landlord is there we will have him in for a toast."

This program would make a day not soon to be forgotten, and, as a perfect finish to it, they were all to ride back to Roubaix, to inspect Jeanne Marie's smart little shop and the bijou apartment above it, and then leave the young couple in their new home.

The wedding was one of rustic charm. Seldom does the sun of Flanders have a chance to come up in such a sky of smokeless blue, and to shine so golden on a hundred full-cropped acres all in their summer bravery of fruit and foliage. The flowers in those twenty dewy gardens were grown to sell in the market, but roses, sweet-peas, and June lilies were freely contributed, and after matins the demoi-

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selles dressed the altar and chancel rail of the bare little stone church in which Jeanne Marie had been christened. Then old friends and neighbors crowded in to see her married in a costume as simple as any little girl's confirmation dress. And when the wedding-party boarded the electric car a hundred hands and kerchiefs were waved from kitchen doors, and Poilu barked a cheerful *au revoir* from the crossing before he raced back to his lonesome sentry duty.

It was a new and delightful experience to every member of that little family to stand on the low eminence of the citadel on that bright June day, when a wide view of the flat country was to be had, and the whole population appeared to be out of doors and bent on innocent diversion. Continuous streams of traffic rushed over every poplar-bordered road, and hedged byways, canal dikes, and the grassy banks of the winding Deule swarmed with people. The air was so clear that they could mark the eastward course of the Lys River, five miles to the north, and the misty curving line of the hills beyond to the Messines

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Ridge, where every elevation of two hundred feet above the plain was dignified by the name of mountain.

There were charming old farming villages and windmills in that modern landscape, and a few old buildings in Lille, whose history goes back a thousand years to the counts of Flanders. But there was nothing more ancient than the fortifications that were built by the great Vauban about the time that La Salle, the "undespairing Norman," was taking possession of a wild empire in America for Louis le Grand. Now, although barracks and storeroom and a small arsenal were kept in order for the occasional maneuvering of the Territorial Reserves of the Nord, grass grew in the dry moat, the drawbridge was spiked down, birds nested on the ramparts, and picnic parties dined *al fresco* on the esplanade. With three-quarters of a million people living in the city and its straggling factory suburbs below, it was difficult to believe *grandpère* when he described how this fortress had once sheltered all the inhabitants of Lille, and stood a siege of six months, while a Span-



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ish army froze and rotted on the bleak marsh.

“It would be of no use to-day,” he admitted. “Guns mounted on the high banks of the Lys could batter these walls of masonry into rubble and dust. Lille should have modern defenses, with a ring of forts as far out as Roubaix and Armentières, such as protect Antwerp.”

“*Bon Dieu, grandpère!*” cried madame. “If you were marshal of France you would have our village under fire. Such a man for war!”

And Monsieur Henri insisted: “No, *mon père*. Lille is safest as it is. To bombard an open city is forbidden.”

“But it is not *verboten!*” The word that is symbolic of the autocratic methods of Germany came out as explosively as a pistol-shot. Old Gabriel could have told them what forbidden horrors had happened to defenseless hamlets and farmsteads in the war of 1870, but he had promised madame not to disturb the general happiness of the day, and he shut his mouth in a grim line, determined not to let it betray him again. But gentle, sensitive,

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eager little Victor, who understood and loved his grandfather the best of all, kept tight hold of the old man's hand all the way down into the holiday-thronged streets of the city.

They had lingered so long among the fortifications that they found the ancient Palace of Richebourg, which, in these republican days, shelters the art-school, the collection of Old Masters, and the Hôtel de Ville all under its many gables, closed for the day. Jeanne Marie turned impulsively to her bridegroom. In spite of that clandestine kiss, perhaps because of it, she was still a little shy with him.

"You are disappointed, monsieur! I am sorry." Her sympathy was so naïve, and she was so distractingly pretty and girlish in her blue linen frock and sailor hat, that Joseph Menard quite lost his head.

"We will come another time," he murmured with ardor, "just you and I—together—*bel amie!*" and Jeanne Marie ran on ahead, with her dark lashes sweeping her flushed cheeks.

She understood what he meant, and

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loved him for it. They were young, with a long life—together—before them. This one day could well be devoted to the happiness of those who by their toil and self-denial had secured to them easier circumstances. With fine feeling Joseph Menard seated his bride between her father and mother at dinner, and delighted his own mother by his gallant attentions.

They were all at their ease in the shabby old inn, whose open courtyard and timbered galleries were patronized chiefly by farmers and small shopkeepers. And to find the same landlord, grizzled and rheumatic indeed, but still full of *bons mots* and dramatically protesting the liveliest recollection of the former romantic event in the family, made a gay interlude. So what with the bride's cake to be cut, and merry toasts to be proposed, and the black coffee, rare cheese, and big, sweet cherries to be consumed at leisure, they sat at the wedding-feast until the last glow of sunset had faded from the sky.

It had been the intention to go home then; but they found the Rue Nationale, sparkling with electric lights and humming

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with pleasure-cars, quite irresistible. Here was the gay world which woke up about the time hard-working folk went to bed. After all, a wedding in the family did not occur every day, so why not make the most of it? Madame Menard admitted, what she had never confessed to the curé, that she had long been consumed with a desire to spend an evening hour in the public square before the brilliantly lighted Café de Paris.

"For the price of a glass of syrup-water one may sit at a table under a tree, and listen to a fine orchestra, and see for oneself how the fashionable world dines. *Ciel!* But that would be as good as a play!"

"You would not be embarrassed by your peasant dress, *ma mère?*" Joseph inquired, with solicitude.

"No, *mon fils*, I would not. If the peasant mother of a President of France can visit her son, in his palace of the Bourbons, in her decent cap and sabots, Madame Daulac and I can face the *bourgeois* of Lille with composure. The only thing to be considered is the foolish expense." She laughed as merrily as the rest at her unaccountable whim, but con-

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sidered it with a gesture of airy tolerance: “But there you are. You must take human nature as you find it.”

“I can indulge my good mother on my wedding-day,” Joseph assured her. He kissed her on both cheeks that, tanned and rouged by fifty years of wind and rain, sun and frost, were beginning to wrinkle like a russet apple.

It had been the first hot and humid day of the season, and night had fallen sultry and windless. But now, as they found seats around a small green table, and gave their order to a waiter with a napkin over his arm, the sky darkened, and pale summer lightning began to play around the western horizon. They were listening to the light music of the latest comic opera, and watching the society comedy that was staged behind the plate-glass windows of the restaurant, with the thrilled intentness of children at a fairy play, when a messenger dashed out of the railway station—the immense, glass-domed Gare du Nord—with a telegram. Running across the square, he disappeared in a newspaper office.

## *THE HONEYMOON*

It was thus that the curtain was rolled up on the prelude to the greatest of world tragedies. On any other evening of the week such startling news as that the heir to the throne of Austria and his wife had been shot by a Serbian student in Sarajevo, Bosnia, would have flooded the street with extras and shrieking gamins. As it was, only a bulletin was posted in a window, but the alarm spread and ran like fire before the rising wind.

In every city of France, whose fate had for so long hung in the balance of international politics, such holiday crowds were shocked into silence and immobility. No one moved, but sat, or stood, staring at his neighbor. And in every such gathering there were public men, intellectual women, and blue-smocked, saboted veterans like Gabriel Daulac, to whom a bereft and ruined youth had brought a terrible enlightenment, to voice the universal fear:

"This is the match that will explode the powder-magazine of Europe."

From point to point of the complicated matter the quick Gallic mind leaped like the forked lightning of the threatening

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storm. A confession had been wrung from the assassin that a bomb, which had missed the royal mark earlier in the day, had been furnished by officials in Belgrade, Serbia. Austria was already holding that little country responsible for a political crime which struck at the roots of the Hapsburg dynasty. What would she do? Nothing, unless she was backed by Germany. Russia would not stand by and see that small nation of Slavic people crushed, and Austria could not fight Russia alone. But with Germany in command the armies of the Czar could be routed, and the coveted Bagdad Corridor opened across the Balkans. Then, with France left without a friend on the Continent, Germany would turn and break through her western frontier.

The thing was so monstrous, so unthinkable, so fantastic, that a Latin people who talk with their hands, their shoulders, their eyebrows, and with a polite elaboration of speech, suddenly lost the greater part of their powers of expression. From that hour the French began to speak with a Saxon brevity and restraint. In Paris,

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silent crowds remained in public places all night, waiting for news; but in Lille the streets were cleared by an electric storm. As the people scurried for shelter there were shouts of "*Vive la patrie!*" and the orchestra of the Café de Paris crashed into the stirring strains of *La Marseillaise*.

The dazed little wedding-party found refuge in the Gare du Nord until the first violence of wind and rain had spent itself. Then they raced across the square and scrambled into a crowded car. As it was still raining when they neared the village crossing, it was hastily decided that Madame Menard should get off there with the others, leaving the bride and groom to go on to Roubaix alone.

Every bit of forced gaiety departed with them. Jeanne Marie pressed her little nose against the splashed glass to watch her dear family struggling homeward through the storm. In a flare of lightning she saw them running along the hedge, drenched by a golden shower from the pear trees, and Poilu leaping upon them and barking a clamorous welcome. Above the rumble of thunder which followed the



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flash, she fancied she heard her grandfather's drum.

“Oh, he should let the people sleep while they may!” she thought. Life which, an hour before, had seemed so warm and safe and happy had become a chill and menacing thing. The dark eyes in her small, white face were as big as a bewildered child's when she turned and clasped her hands around her young husband's arm.

“I don't understand it, monsieur,” she said. Indeed, such things are not taught to demoiselles in convents.

“Angel! You understand, do you not, that France may have to defend her safety and honor?” He lifted her hand to his lips, but had no word with which to console her. In the event of war he would be among the first to go, before they had fairly crossed the threshold of this new life together.

Her shyness was forgotten in the threat of separation. “Oh, Joseph, so soon!” she murmured, and she pressed her cheek against his sleeve. But after a moment she lifted her head and smiled bravely.

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In those tragic days, when a brutal and greedy will was being imposed upon the world, no Frenchwoman failed her husband or son in courage.

The storm was passing over in showery gusts of wind when they left the car in Roubaix. Hand in hand they ran along the wet, deserted street, and let themselves into the shop with a latch-key. The place was dimly illuminated through the display window and the glass door-panel, but the walled-in stairway at the rear, up which they groped to another door on the landing, was dark. When Joseph found the electric switch they faced each other, breathless and dripping, but in the glow of a rose-shaded lamp, in their own home. His arms closed around her, and in swift surrender she lay upon his breast. That only a brief respite might be granted to them gave a poignant intensity to their happiness.

Within a half-hour the stars had come out, and any passer-by in the Rue République, looking up through a darkened window above the little lingerie-shop of Madame Joseph Menard, might have seen

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a taper burning before an image of the Virgin. Another humble family altar had been set up and consecrated with prayer.

The heart of France was in her throat the next morning when it was reported that Emperor William had hurried home from Kiel Harbor, where the German navy had been entertaining the British grand fleet. The English admiral, taking alarm, had weighed anchor, slipped out to sea in the misty dawn, and sped for home. Then there was a week of paralyzing suspense, in which every normal activity slowed down. In Roubaix no one hurried home from work. The people bought the latest editions of the papers and stood in quiet groups in the streets, discussing the scant news which emanated from the cautious chancelleries of Europe. Expressions of horror of the deed, and sympathy for the aged Emperor Franz Joseph, whose personal life had been a long series of tragedies, were telegraphed from every capital; and first of all the royal courts, that of panic-stricken and protesting little Serbia was ordered into mourning.

To the simple factory workers, farmers,

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and miners of the Nord, the accounts of the imperial funeral were as unreal, and as unrelated to their own affairs, as some tale of violence, mystery, and splendor of the Middle Ages. With almost indecent haste the unpopular victims were hurried through Vienna to Lower Austria and out of sight. Ferried across the Danube at midnight of the sixth day, on a barge lighted by ancient flambeaux, and escorted by court guards in glittering medieval uniforms, they were buried in the crypt of the royal chapel at Artstettin and quickly forgotten. After a secret meeting of the Central Powers at Potsdam, on Sunday the 5th of July, of which the world knew nothing until three years later, it was announced that the Austrian Emperor was returning to the country, and that the Kaiser had sailed from Kiel on his yacht, for his customary summer cruise along the coast of Norway. To nations west of the Rhine it appeared that the matter was to be composed in a civilized fashion.

On Monday, Madame Daulac stopped at the shop, on her way home from the

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market, with the good news. Jeanne Marie ran out, pale and hollow-eyed, for the first week of her honeymoon had been a time of conflicting emotions, of tenderness and passion torn by terror and despair. Her grandfather was sitting in the cart, looking frail and worn, but as stiffly upright as the last of the Old Guard. Madame had fetched him into the city to see a doctor. She was laughing excitedly now, and kissed her daughter rather violently, for the sudden snapping of the tension had made even the phlegmatic a trifle hysterical.

"Nothing is to happen, after all, *ma fille*. I assured *grandpère* that it was not reasonable that the crime of a crazy boy should set the world on fire; but, behold! he must torment himself into a malady of the heart."

"Nothing to happen? *Camouflet!* A smoke is made in Berlin, and we are such obliging imbeciles as to go blind. Indifference to the fate of a rascally Hapsburg has been overdone. *Le diable* is in this business!" His black eyes blazed, and he began to talk in burning invective of the

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infernal trickery of Bismarck, with his lying telegram that had betrayed France into war.

"Dear *grandpère*, that was nearly a half-century ago. Such wickedness has gone out of fashion," said Jeanne Marie, with bright confidence. He replied with a gesture of despair. He might as well have been a warning ghost, risen from the populous field of Sedan, and unable to make himself seen or heard.

"This will never do," declared madame. "I must be getting him home and into his bed. The doctor gave me a potion to make him sleep. *Ma foi!* What a time! No one in my family has repose except Poilu. The *chien* is indeed a comfort." At a word the eager dog moved off in his long, easy stride. Madame's knitting-needles glinted in the sun as she walked rapidly beside the cart.

Jeanne Marie ran back into the shop, tremulous with happiness. She would not see Joseph until evening, for he ate his midday meal at a café near the factory, that her business hours might not be interrupted. All the afternoon she was too

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busy to think, for the families of the *bourgeois* were in haste to be away to the bathing-beaches of Ostend, and she was deluged with orders for summer finery. It was after four o'clock before the last of her customers had gone home in their limousines and electric coupés to dress for dinner, and she was free to inspect work brought in by women who sewed in their own homes, and to give out new materials and instructions. At five she dismissed her assistant, turned the interesting contents of the smart little cash-register into a box to take up-stairs, and hung a card on the door-knob, asking any later caller to ring the bell "*s'il vous plaît*."

With the locking of the shop door her personality changed in the twinkling of an eye. The business woman was submerged in the household fairy who, in dust-cap and apron, flitted about, putting her tiny *ménage* in order. It was a marvel how many things making for comfort she had managed to set forth in the two small rooms and a kitchenette, and still leave space for two young people who were desperately in love to move about. And,

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by getting up at five o'clock in the morning, everything was kept as neat as the traditional pin.

No other working-people in the world but the French would be satisfied with the dainty ladies' luncheon which Jeanne Marie prepared for the dinner of herself and her bridegroom. When a pot of soup had been set to bubbling on a two-burner gas-stove, a head of lettuce to soaking in ice-water, coffee put into the pot ready for boiling, milk and eggs and bread crumbs beaten for a soufflé, and the cream cheese and cherries which her mother had brought in from the farm arranged on dessert-plates, the ornamental little housekeeper busied herself about her toilette.

With nothing more than a fresh organdie collar, a powder-puff, and a box of hair-pins, she achieved the miracle. She had but two or three plain frocks, the latest novelty in neckwear, and a gift for hair-dressing, but the little humbug wore anything with such an air that she set the style for her customers, and her infatuated young husband was fully persuaded that she possessed an exten-



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sive wardrobe in the latest fashion of Paris.

The table was laid in the *salon* when Joseph ran up the stairs, two steps at a time, and upset a chair in his haste to reach her with the good news. They were in the gayest of spirits at dinner, and afterward Joseph put on an old, white smock and helped clear the table and wash the dishes. Then Jeanne Marie lay on the divan in the soft summer twilight, while he sat near her, caressing his little pointed mustache and smoking a cigarette. When darkness had fallen he switched on the light and brought a text-book and drawing materials to the table, to work out a problem in geometric designing. Jeanne Marie sat on an ottoman at his feet, embroidering blue forget-me-nots on a pink satin camisole.

Two people who had worked as hard as they, on a long, hot day, and who still had tasks to finish, might well have had their vivacity worn a little threadbare. But the French face life debonairly, flinging it a gay challenge, and investing it with the glamour of the social graces; and love

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is not dismayed if it must find romance along paths narrow, toilsome, and unadventurous.

"But what is it for, *ma petite?*" Joseph asked, for Jeanne Marie wore only the plainest of clean cotton herself.

"Monsieur, it is a coquettish garment for a very fat, very lazy, very rich lady whose husband does not love her any more. The poor woman must have something to console her." With inimitable drollery she often gave him a résumé of any society comedy which fell under her humorous eye.

His eyebrows arched in comment. "I hope, Madame Menard, that your husband will never have the misfortune to have money."

"Oh, fie, fie, my friend! We shall need a great deal of money one of these days to put into the bank for a *dot* for mademoiselle." She blushed like any rose, and Joseph laughed and embraced the daring little witch, for this was anticipating events indeed. To be amiable and amusing is a point of honor in French family life.

When the season's rush was over in the

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shop they planned to have the Sunday holiday in Lille which they had promised themselves on their wedding-day, but summer slipped into the fourth week of July with no slackening of orders. Jeanne Marie was often so tired, when she locked the shop, that she refreshed herself with a bath and a nap, and then, when Joseph came in, they dined simply at an inexpensive café. One evening she pulled the divan across the window which overlooked the street, and lay down. She heard the factory whistles blow, the rush of the human tide, and the rising clamor of traffic. Then she fell asleep, to awaken in the darkness and an alarming silence.

Joseph had not come in, or, coming in and finding her so, had gone out again! The brilliantly lighted streets were still full of people, standing under lamp-posts, reading newspapers, or gathered in groups in quiet conversation, as on the nights of the first, terrible week of her marriage. With her heart beating like a hammer, she fled down the stairs to meet her husband as he entered the shop.

"Oh, Joseph, what has happened?" She

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clasped her hands around his head and drew his face down to her lips.

Austria had sent her ruthless ultimatum to Serbia. The unprepared nations which were to be attacked had been lulled into a sense of security. Then the bolt had been shot from a clear sky. This was a blow, not at Serbia alone, but at human liberty.

"Then *grandpère* is right. He has always been right!" The spirit of that passionate patriot blazed up in Jeanne Marie. "Every man and woman and child, and even our faithful dogs, will perish before France is conquered by such a foe." She had his scorn, his defiance of the barbarian, but these would not embitter her, for she also had the gift of laughter. She dismissed the subject with gay disdain and was all tender concern for Joseph. "*Cher ami*, you must be famished. We will find something to eat here." They sat at the bare work-table in the kitchenette and ate bread and milk. Nothing mattered, now, except to be alone, together.

In the night, when she lay in a troubled, dreaming doze, seeing the myriads of poppies which then flickered like little

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tongues of flame in all the fields of the Nord, her husband spoke to her:

“My angel, are you awake?”

“Yes, my dear, my friend,” for her anguished eyes were suddenly wide open, staring into the darkness.

But his voice was exultant. “At least we have lived. *Le bon Dieu* has given us our month of bliss together, our *lune de miel*. Not even death can take that happiness from us.”

The infamous history of the next ten days is seared on the soul, burned into the unforgiving memory of the world. An Austrian army was threatening Belgrade from across the Danube when the Kaiser, overtaken by despatches at Bergen, Norway, returned to Berlin to stand by his ally in “shining armor.” Then, with dizzy rapidity and diabolically clouded diplomacy, events moved toward the end ordained by the “All-Highest” before he departed on his three weeks’ pleasure cruise. Within five days Germany declared war on Russia, and turned to strike treacherously at France through neutral territory.

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At five o'clock on Saturday afternoon, August 1st, the factory workers who poured into the streets of Roubaix found big yellow cards posted in public places. Throngs appeared as if by magic, from shuttered houses and closing shops, and streamed toward the Hôtel de Ville, where the mayor delivered an address from the steps. It took Joseph another hour to push through the press and reach home. Jeanne Marie had been kneeling by the window, watching the black and all but soundless flood of slowly moving people. She got to her feet unsteadily when she heard her husband's quick, firm step on the stairs. Within, his exalted young face was a white mask against the shadowy door. It was so that she saw him, on many a sleepless night afterward, lying on a dim battle-field, with his face upturned to the sky.

"Joseph—*O bon Dieu!*— It is not—!"

"Yes, all France is called to arms. But war has not been declared. This step is taken in the hope of forcing an honorable peace."

But they had no illusions. This was

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war to the death with a power that had spent forty years in preparing to dominate and enslave the world. Her back was to the fading light, so he did not see her gray face, her clenched hands, her rigid throat. He only heard the valiant voice of his bride sending him forth to die for France:

*“Vive la patrie!”*

## CHAPTER IV

### LA MOBILISATION GÉNÉRALE

**S**WIFT, exciting preparations for departure and brave farewells had to be crowded into the next thirty hours, for men of all arms were ordered to report to officers in their nearest railway stations by midnight of the next day. And there were no craven hearts in France. Before they had finished a sketchy meal, Joseph and Jeanne Marie heard the throb of a drum. A spontaneous procession of patriots, many with women clinging to them, had begun to form in the widest thoroughfare of the city. Here and there a blanched and stricken face under a lamp, or a torchlight in a visored cap, flecked a crest of the dark streams which poured in from every crossing street.

"The marchers will need music. Come, my comrade!" Taking her hand and seiz-



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ing his cornet, Joseph ran all the way to the brightly lighted restaurant that was the rendezvous of such members of his regimental band as lived in Roubaix. The air already resounded with the fanfares of buglers, and eager feet were marking time to the beating of drums. When the trombone-player and 'cello arrived they fell into line. Never had this generation of the French heard *La Marseillaise* played with such patriotic fervor; and the question,

Shall hireling hosts, a ruffian band,  
Affright and desolate the land  
While truth and liberty lie bleeding?

had ceased to be mere rhetoric and became a looming peril. To the anguished call: "To arms! to arms! ye brave!" the bent backs of factory workers and railroad laborers straightened, and the limp legs of shopkeepers, clerks, and students stiffened. With "all hearts resolved on victory or death," the defenders of France swung into the military stride.

The Tricolor was waved all along the route, and the marchers were cheered with

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*vive la patries.* But in contrast to the orgies of joy and hatred in German cities, there was not a shout of triumph, a cry of rage, or a shaken fist. In France, where the imposition of foreign arrogance and greed had summoned every home to the sacrifice, there was a national sense of tragic destiny, and a high resolve to perish, but never to surrender.

Other bands of musicians were soon in line, so when the head of the procession reached the western limits of the city Joseph and Jeanne Marie dropped out. Crossing the canal bridge to the Lille road, from which pleasure traffic had disappeared, they hurried out to the farm. The pallid crescent of a young moon hung over the canal and the palmlike plumes of the stripped poplars. From a clump of lilac-shrubs which screened the small door at the foot of the church belfry, a nightingale poured forth his tender lament, "Here lies Pierrot." The drowsy scent of the poppies seemed to have put the village to sleep, for every house but two was dark, tight-shut on that hot August night, as though to bar out the dreadful rumor that

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was abroad. Only from the shop of the German wine-seller and the home of the Daulacs was lamplight streaming through open doors, to illuminate the sylvan lane.

Joseph and Jeanne Marie had joined the tense family group in the dooryard when a messenger on a motorcycle dashed up with the big yellow card, and the telegram from the War Office in Paris for Gabriel Daulac. To the French soldier of the Napoleonic empires war was a drama, to be brilliantly costumed and staged, not the grim, sad business that it is to-day to the Republic. The Alsatian veteran had put on the blood-stained, time-crumpled uniform in which he had marched to glory and fled from the *débâcle* in 1870—the pathetically theatrical red breeches, the brass-button-studded blue coat, and the varnished leather trappings that had furnished such gay targets for German bullets. Now he rallied as to a bugle-call and charged at the nearest enemy.

As the wine-shop was the one semi-public building on the rustic street, with the exception of the church, its wide door had

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always been used for posting notices. The German proprietor filled the doorway with his gross figure that had always been an offense to this old man of temperate habit and fastidious taste, but he stepped aside and watched the bizarrely tricked out veteran nail up the order for mobilization. The man's father had marched into Paris with the conquering army, but his own jovial boast that he intended to repeat that performance on "the day" had always been taken as a harmless pleasantry by every one but Gabriel Daulac. Now, some secret information had made him bold, for there was an assured insolence in his loose-lipped smile and in the way in which he flourished an imaginary stein of beer as though proposing a toast:

*"Nach Parisse!"* he shouted.

"I shall see to it personally, monsieur, that you go to Paris!" Having made this definite engagement with a foe who could have broken him in two and thrown the pieces into the canal, old Gabriel turned to his official duty.

The saddest sound in France, on that historic summer evening, was the beating

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of the drums by the *appariteurs* in the farming villages. As this member of the Legion of Patriots marched over his route, his drum-sticks fell fast and loud. At the end of the street he mounted the church steps, where Monsieur Henri already stood, shouldering his father's rusty musket. Victor proudly bore the Tricolor, and Joseph sounded the bugle-call on his cornet and then broke into the national air. Madame Daulac and Jeanne Marie, with the crowd of grief-stricken people who filed slowly out of their dark houses, listened in silence to the order for the mobilization of all the armed forces of France.

Monsieur Henri and a half-dozen other graying and bearded men of the Territorial Reserves embraced their wives and children and grandchildren and trudged away at once, in their smocks and sabots, to report for duty at local headquarters in Lille. Before morning they had been outfitted with uniforms and arms in the ancient citadel, and were standing guard over bridges, railway stations, canal landings and locks, public buildings, and im-

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portant factories. No one slept in households where there was a confusion of preparation for the departure of every able-bodied man between twenty and forty-one. A myriad of hastily lighted candles burned on the altar of the bare little chapel all night, and the curé remained in the confessional.

Gabriel Daulac ignored the disqualification of being a quarter of a century too old for military duty, and enrolled himself into the secret service. When under his own roof he chose Poilu for an orderly, and enlightened the family as to his self-appointed task.

"*A bas* with the spy! The Nord has been infested with the slimy breed for a dozen years. We need no other sign that Germany intends to sweep across Belgium. This serpent knows who of us has hay in his barn, wine in his cellar, a handful of sous in a stocking, or a pretty daughter to furnish an hour's sport for a blond beast of a Prussian officer. I nursed such a viper once—" He choked on an agonizing memory. "Now I must be at the training of Poilu to watch a two-

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legged animal as he does the stable-yard and market-cart."

"*Ma foi! grandpère*, the *chien* is not a bloodhound!" cried madame. "Would you mobilize the dogs? We shall need them for work if we are to make a living," for nearly every wage-earner had been called from the homes, and the people of the village must now depend wholly on the produce of their few acres.

"Livings! We shall be fortunate if we are permitted to live. Germany is a foe that makes war even on the beasts of the field. Poilu will need all his courage and wit before this barbarous business is finished. He must learn the smell of a *boche*." Slipping on a black smock over his ancient uniform, he called the dog and disappeared into the night. When the German strolled up to the Lille road to seek the company of his kind in Roubaix, Poilu sniffed his tracks to the crossing. Then man and dog lay alertly in the shadow of the hedge, while the moon went down, leaving the landscape dim and featureless. When the wine-seller came skulking home, after midnight, the

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two trailed him around the church, where, keeping in the shelter of the lilacs, he fitted a key into the lock of the small door at the foot of the belfry stairs.

Old Gabriel chuckled as he snapped the night chain on Poilu's collar and patted the head of the excited dog who had caught something of the spirit of the adventure.

"*C'est bien!* We shall catch Monsieur Reynard red-handed, *mon brave!*"

When the few personal belongings which Joseph was permitted to take with him had been packed, he and Jeanne Marie lay sleepless until dawn, talking their hearts out, storing up memories for eternity. Then the day was filled with a dozen last things to be done. A discreet woman had to be engaged to live with Jeanne Marie, photographs hastily taken, some hours spent in Turcoing with Joseph's mother. The sun was sloping down the west when they left Madame Menard in her two-acre, partially glassed-over flower-garden, where bees were garnering sweets for the gluttonous invader.



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As they were returning to the city it thrilled them to see men streaming into the railway towns over every poplar-sentineled highway. Bands of musicians, fragments of companies, units of regiments of every service, still in civilian garb, but with packs on their backs, formed into ranks at the crossings, wreathed their straw and cloth hats with poppies from the fields, and marched on, singing. As one observer of the time made note: “Marianne went to war with her heart in her throat, but with her liberty cap set jauntily on her head.”

From midnight until four o'clock of a morning of warm, drizzling rain Joseph sat on a packing-case in the crowded railway station with Jeanne Marie, awaiting his turn to entrain for some military depot in the eastern forts. He had no real anxiety about leaving her on this frontier, where there was not a garrison nor a defensive post between the Channel ports and the valley of the Meuse, for not until noon on Monday was it known in Paris that one German army was pouring through Luxemburg and another march-

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ing into Belgium. The war, it was thought, was to be fought out in the iron-mining district of French Lorraine, and the enemy held by the impregnable line of fortifications which stretched from Verdun to Belfort. The Black Country of the Nord, safely outside the war zone, was to speed up its industries, and supply the army and the nation with coal and steel; cotton, woolen, and linen goods; leather, oil, and beet sugar; dyestuffs and chemicals. So Joseph and Jeanne Marie had nothing to think of but the parting, and if that was to be creditably achieved they must make a jest of it.

"Behold, madame, I shall see Paris and have romantic adventures," he boasted, lightly, "but you will be *triste*, dull, desolate without me."

"Indeed, monsieur, I shall do very well," she replied, with spirit. "The shop will require all my attention. It will be more prosperous than ever with the *bourgeois* making so much money in the factories. And when you return, a ragamuffin with a great beard, there will be *gros sous* in the bank to set you up again."

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“But in the event that I lose an arm! *Peste!* It would inconvenience me to have to roll a cigarette with one hand.”

She kissed the hand with sudden passion, and their arms went frankly around each other in a crowd where men, women, and children stood embraced. Only that once were they serious. His heart skipped a beat at the thought that she might have to bear the heaviest burden of life alone.

“Angel wife, if there should be a child!” he said, with brooding tenderness.

“Wonderful! *Le Petit* would be some one to work for; something of you to live for.” Her love and her bright bravery made him clench his fists.

“Beautiful France would not be a country for women and children to live in if those Prussian beasts should prevail again. They shall not pass the eastern forts!”

But because they must be brave for each other, and for the two million heart-broken women of France who were to be left behind, they recovered quickly from that desperate mood. When he was at an open window in the troop-train, and she

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stretching up from the platform to cling to his hand, he said, gaily:

"*Bel amie*, what am I to fetch you for a souvenir?"

"You — just you, yourself," was the message of her eyes, but her lips laughed: "Oh, a German helmet, if you please. Inverted and painted green, it would make a charming flower-basket."

He struck an attitude and saluted. "It is done, madame! But it will be so full of holes that it would serve better for a watering-pot. *Au revoir!*"

No one said "*adieu*." With hundreds of other women who stumbled over one another, dropping sabots and satin slippers, peasant caps and silken motor coats, to be trampled in the mud of the slippery embankment, Jeanne Marie ran beside the track. She still ran as the train gained speed, and until she could no longer distinguish her husband's face. Then, as it swung around a curve, even the red blur of the tail-light was swallowed up in the foggy rain.

The region had been drained of its last defender when news of the German in-

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vasion of Belgium struck the Nord with paralysis. At once Roubaix took on the aspect of a beleaguered city. In order to rescue the enormous quantities of supplies in this rich manufacturing district, the government seized every means of transportation except the dog-carts. The telegraph and postal services were curtailed, almost cutting off communication with armies that were, even then, invading the lost province of Alsace, and besieged by the enemy in the Longwy forts. Factories, short of skilled labor and coal, ran on reduced time, and half the shops and cafés were closed. Newspapers issued but a single sheet, with scant news of the war. Then prices rose alarmingly as wages were stopped in every household, and small coins disappeared into stocking banks for use in terrifying emergencies.

After two weeks of high hope, disaster followed disaster. The Liège forts crumbled; the brave little Belgian army fell back on Antwerp; Brussels was surrendered; and the small British force at Mons, unsupported by French troops, was obliged to retreat into France, over roads

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jammed with fleeing people. Word came to Roubaix of infamies unheard of since barbarians descended from northern forests on ancient Greece and Rome. Incredulity turned to stunned conviction; stupefaction blazed into anger, then died down to a dazed despair as, day by day, the thunder of marching legions drew nearer.

Only the edge of that flood of war touched Roubaix, for the gray avalanche swept by, forty miles to the south, and rushed down the river valleys to the gates of Paris. But human wreckage soon began to be washed across the frontier, for fifty thousand German cavalry, and engineers in armored motor-cars, had been left behind to spread desolation over western Belgium from the Meuse to the Scheldt. Wretched fugitives fled from blazing homes and plundered towns into northern France. Men of military age had been shot or imprisoned; decimated families had been scattered in the panic-stricken flight; old people had fallen and died by the way; children had been lost, wounded, or shocked into dumbness by

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unforgettable horrors; mothers of young girls had gone insane; and the demoiselles—those who had not disappeared altogether—were figures of shame and wild misery.

Every day for a month, while streams of broken refugees continued to pour through Roubaix, Madame Daulac was among the market-women who turned their cart-loads of vegetables into the soup-kettles that were set up in the square of the Hôtel de Ville, to feed the famished. Poilu, driven by Victor, carried the sick and injured to beds that were hastily assembled in the market booths, and Jeanne Marie helped the nursing Sisters from the hospital care for them, long after the demoiselles and young married women of the Nord began their exodus into Normandy.

“You, too, must go, *ma fille*,” madame insisted, sadly. “When the Germans have captured Paris they will return for the rich loot of Flanders.”

“Yes, *maman*, I will go to the convent in Lille and work in the military hospital of the *Croix Rouge*; but not”—and she lifted her head in proud disdain—“while

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there are martyred Belgians here to be relieved. But you, dear mother, and *grandpère*, and *le petit* Victor? What will you do?"

In every region that was overrun there were fatalists, and there were people of courage and stoic philosophy who remained in their ancestral homes, and defied and outwitted the criminal hordes who robbed and bullied and oppressed them. To a woman of Madame Daulac's spirit there was but one course of action.

"I stay here, *ma fille*," she said, with her pleasant smile that was as bland as new milk. "*Ma foi!* It would be a shame for a French peasant of my age and strength to run like a rabbit from the infamous *boche*. And observe these poor refugees! The old perish like uprooted trees, and *les enfants* die like plowed-up grass. *Grand-père* and Victor and Poilu and I are the home guard. Our feet are not to be loosened from the soil of France that the enemy may possess it."

Before the 1st of September and the battle of the Marne, a division of German troops was scattered over the Nord.



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Avoiding the cities and larger towns, which were guarded by Territorial Reserves, detachments of Uhlans, and engineers in bomb-filled motor-trucks, hid in bits of woodland, abandoned pit-heads, and vacant factories by day, and by night they terrified the populous country with well-organized raids. Possessing the minutest maps, and aided by resident spies, they traveled with speed and precision, blowing up bridges and canal locks, wrecking supply-trains and mills, cutting wires, and killing lonely sentinels with the ingenious torturings and mutilations of savages. And airplanes appeared, scouting from the sky unchallenged, and hurling down death and destruction.

Jeanne Marie, waiting for news from Joseph, lingered into October. He had been in the great victory on the Marne, and was in the army which pursued the routed foe and plunged into the two weeks of dreadful carnage on the Aisne. Her little business ruined, she returned to the farm. A few cart-loads of rubbish—useless chiffons and bits of furniture—was all that was left of the *dot* of three thousand

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francs that it had taken madame nineteen years of toil and self-denial to save. But Jeanne Marie refused to be dismayed.

"I have my skill in my head and hands, and customers who will return. The enemy cannot rob me of those. And Joseph and I are young. When the war is over we can begin again." Every evening she carried a candle to the church, and prayed that her husband might return to her, kneeling with the women of the village who crowded around the chancel rail.

When the raiding division was withdrawn for the task of reducing the defenses of Antwerp, the people of the Nord had a three weeks' respite in which to harvest their root crops and orchard fruits, and to bury them in secret caches opened from cellar walls. Then every small thing of any value was hidden. The beautiful old brazen milk-cans, copper utensils, silver spoons, and brass candlesticks were interred deep under forcing-beds and cobbled paths. Tiles were removed from roofs and replaced, after best clothing and bedding had been stuffed into the angles under the gables. The heirlooms of

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carved and canopied beds, armoires and linen-chests, that were to be found in nearly every farm-house, could not be concealed, nor could the thoroughbred cows in the pastures, the poultry and cart-dogs and the gay market-carts. Madame Daulac left the satin-and-gold-bedecked bisque Virgin on the mantel to look down sadly on the scanty fire, firmly convinced that any man who dared desecrate such a sacred object would be struck dead. The house and the family had a poverty-stricken look, and only old people, young children, and stout market-women were still to be seen in the blighted village, where frost had already touched the brown and sodden fields.

Antwerp fell on the 9th of October. With the remnant of the Belgian army escaping along the coast to take up their stand on the Yser, and French and British forces racing to effect a junction with it to protect the Channel ports, Ghent and Ostend were captured and German troops swarmed up the valley of the Lys. Artillery was heard from near Armentières the next day. The open city of Lille was

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under bombardment when a boy scout on a bicycle brought a telegram for Madame Joseph Menard.

Big guns were booming from the Lys, and a cloud of smoke had billowed up above the clustered stacks of Lille, when Jeanne Marie ran up to the crossing to meet the messenger. With the sealed envelop in her hand she groped her way back along the leafless and dripping hedge. She had no need to open it, for to one as obscure as she only one message could come from distracted Paris. Half blind with shock and grief, she turned the corner on which stood the wine-shop. The German had been discreet, but over defenseless beauty and goodness he could not forbear to gloat.

"*Ach*, madame, do not weep! One so bretty und amiable vill soon haf a fine Prussian officer to gonzole her."

"I do not understand you, monsieur," she replied, with cold politeness, and passed on.

He flushed with resentment. These French peasant women could make a superman feel like a pig-dog. Consulting

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his watch, he locked the shop and strode rudely past her, toward the church which stood at the other end of the street. Poilu lifted his head from where he lay on the door-step, to watch him, and when the man disappeared around the belfry tower, the *chien* heaved his bulk from the ground and padded silently after him.

In the house Jeanne Marie sank to the floor and leaned her head against her mother's breast. “Dear *grandpère*, shut the door. I cannot bear it,” she said, for sympathizing neighbors who had seen the messenger had begun to gather in the doorway. Joseph had fallen at Soissons, in the lost battle for the stone-quarries. There was a *Croix de Guerre*, won by gallantry in action, that would be kept for her until it could be safely sent.

She had no relieving tears, and there was scant time for grief, for the Territorial Reserves of Roubaix had been ordered to retire to Arras through Lille, which was to be evacuated to save it from destruction. The indefensible Nord was to be abandoned without a blow. If all was in readiness when the troops appeared, there would be

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military escort for *le petit* Victor, who was to drive his sister to the convent in the dog-cart. So Jeanne Marie began at once to collect what necessary articles she could carry in a small bag. Victor ran up to the road to watch for the soldiers, and madame hurried to the stable to get out the cart. Jeanne Marie and old Gabriel were left alone in the house. The odious encounter with the wine-seller had stirred a memory of her betrothal day, and confirmed a vague sense of tragedy.

"*Grandpère*"—her hushed voice seemed to fill the bare and silent room with echoes—"what happened to your young sister Suzette?"

"She flung herself from a cliff into the Rhine, after she had killed an officer of the Uhlans with his own sword. My mother had hidden her, but a German youth—an orphan taken in out of compassion, and long looked upon as a member of the family—betrayed her into the hands of her despoiler." His frail figure so shook with passion that he gripped the arms of his chair; but when Jeanne Marie hastened to his aid he reassured her. "Do not be

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alarmed, *ma chère*. I cannot die until I have avenged the destruction of my innocent family.”

At that moment Poilu was heard without, leaping against the closed door. Old Gabriel rushed out at that signal from his four-footed orderly, and followed the dog to the clump of lilacs which screened the belfry door. A *Taube*—the “yellow dove” of the early days of the war—was circling the sky, high above the church, its intermittent, clicking drone sounding like that of some giant, venomous beetle. Wheeling suddenly, it flew in a straight line over the canal and dropped bombs on a string of coal-barges. The people of the village appeared to have been blown out of their rocking houses by the force of the explosions. They saw the bodies of the barge-man and his family, and a writhing little schipperke that yelped once, hurled from the shattered deck-house, to strew the current and sink with the wreckage. A burst of flames was quickly quenched, tall poplars tottered and fell from the embankment, and water began to pour through a break in the dike.

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It was all over in a moment, with the *Taube* soaring and sailing away, and then the stout market-women stopped the flood, and frightened children picked up the broken glass and tiles from windows and roofs that must long remain unmended. But they all worked in grim silence at the first of the many tasks which came to be referred to simply as "cleaning up after *les boches*."

Dusk was falling when the German cautiously opened the small door at the foot of the belfry stair and stepped out into the shrubbery. "*A bas l'espion!*" old Gabriel whispered in Poilu's ear, and the dog leaped and bore the man to earth, and then sounded the alarm of such a volley of "woofs" that the women came to his help. They disarmed the spy, searched him and his shop for incriminating papers, brought down an electric flash-light and signal-flags from the defiled belfry, which the curé hastened to purify with holy water, and to hang out the Tricolor from a shuttered window. Binding him with reins from their dog harness, they bore him up to the Lille road and laid him in the



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muddy ditch. The veteran soldier would permit no violence.

"A civilized people cannot compete with this breed of beasts in savagery, mesdames," he said. "And it will be just as disagreeable to him to face a court martial and be stood up against a stone wall and shot."

Having revived his youth by this act of valor, and scored one against the enemy, old Gabriel turned the prisoner over to the Reserves, when they marched by to Lille after nightfall, and bade him an ironic *adieu*.

"So you go to Paris, after all, monsieur! *Bon voyage!*"

Victor and Poilu slept under the cart in the garden of the convent, where rude shelters had been provided for migrating women and children. Not a light glimmered in the city, but the darkness was full of the sounds of hurrying feet, wheeled traffic, and voices shouting orders, for all night long supply-trains, motor-lorries, ambulances, and refugees moved out to the west, under the escort of small bodies of Reserves. Although word had been sent,

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under a flag of truce, that Lille was being evacuated for the peaceful possession of the invader, shells still burst all around it, and now and then one found a target in the crowded streets. As every interval of silence was stabbed by a dull boom, a loud explosion, or the crash of a falling building, the little boy's nerves were shattered. Locking his arms around the big dog's neck, he sobbed himself into a broken sleep.

Jeanne Marie found them so when she came out of the chapel at dawn. Her pretty face had blossomed into a wondrous beauty overnight. And now, after an hour of prayer, it wore the look of the Virgin Mary in the holy pictures, for Jeanne Marie, too, had listened to the Angel of the Annunciation. She did not waken the tired travelers until she had brought bread and milk from the refectory. Sitting in the cart-tail, she talked cheerfully as they ate their breakfasts.

"*Petit frère*, tell *maman* that I am to go with the good Sisters to the field hospital which they are to set up in the garden of the Trappist Monastery on the Mont des

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Chats, back of Ypres. That is so near Heaven that I shall be quite safe. I am permitted to scrub floors and launder linen now, to help keep France and her brave soldiers alive; and by and by, when I have learned a great deal, I am to wear the uniform of the *Croix Rouge* and nurse the wounded. And tell her—tell her"—and her face was suffused with a rosy glow—"that I have a precious gift from Joseph, and am very happy."

The brave child was ashamed of the tear stains which she washed away with her dew-wetted handkerchief. "I will not weep again," he said. "I am to comfort *maman* and *grandpère*."

She kissed and embraced the little brother and the big dog, and hurried them out into the dim street. "Poilu will have you home in an hour, long before the Germans can begin their march through Roubaix."

But at the first corner Victor paused. There would be time for something else. Turning into the broad Rue Nationale, he drove up to the citadel. Pressing on to the barracks, he saluted a guard.

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"*Monsieur le Camarade*, I should like to say *adieu* to *mon père*, if you please."

"Impossible! He could not be found in this confusion. He may have departed." But the man's eye was arrested by Poilu. He called an orderly, and in a moment an officer came out.

"*Mon Capitaine*, behold the noble *chien*!"

"*Bon!* The dog and the cart are mobilized, to pull a machine-gun for *la patrie*."

"Poilu would refuse obedience to a stranger, *Monsieur le Capitaine*, but he does wonders for *mon père*," said Victor, eagerly.

It seemed that a captain could accomplish the impossible, for there was Monsieur Henri in the twinkling of an eye, and volunteering to drive a gun-carriage to the dangerous front below Ypres, where no reservist of forty-three years could be required to go. His slow tongue once loosened, the Fleming began to boast of the accomplishments of his four-footed pupil.

"*Mon Capitaine*, it is the dog that helped my old father capture a spy in a village near Roubaix yesterday. His

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name is Poilu, and he has a soldier's courage, and tricks to deceive the enemy. Behold now! Poilu, thou art dead!" The dog dropped in his loose harness as though he had been shot; then stood up, when bidden, and wagged his tail and lolled his tongue with pride.

"Bravo!" An applauding crowd gathered round the remarkable animal, while *sapeurs* with hatchets knocked away the gay red sides of Madame Daulac's cart, and bolted a machine-gun to the platform between the wheels, with the muzzle pointing to the rear. Victor's heart beat like a hammer in his aching breast, for the world, already a terrifying and forlorn place for any little boy to live in, would be desolate without Poilu.

There was only a moment in which to cling desperately to his father and whisper into a blond, Flemish beard. "*Cher papa*, I will burn a candle and pray to Mother Mary every night for the good French soldiers to come back."

Not for nothing had Poilu led the procession of market-carts from the village. At his master's order, "*Avancez donc, mon*

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*brave!"* the dog strained forward with the heaviest load he had ever pulled, and with a bell-like note that was a bugle-call to the faint-hearted, took the leadership of a dog battery of machine-guns.

## CHAPTER V

### "MADE IN GERMANY"

THE pomp of war had such a fascination for the ardent young grandson of Gabriel Daulac that not until the last soldier had marched out of the citadel did Victor start homeward through Lille.

He hurried, then, for he had brave tales of his father and Poilu, and of the bearded Reserves of the Nord, to tell *grandpère*. During a week of hand-to-hand fighting with raiding engineers and Uhlans in the outskirts of the city, and with a regiment of infantry that, arriving in armored trains in the Gare du Nord, had penetrated to the Rue Nationale, they had held the enemy at bay. The French and British armies had thus been given time to form their line of defense ten miles to the west, and to rush troops up to the Yser and the sea. Now, with unarmed recruits, their wounded,

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prisoners of war, refugees, and hospital units and their precious equipment to defend, the Reserves must cut their way through a screen of German cavalry, and fight a rear-guard action out to British headquarters in La Bassée.

After a night of clamorous exodus, wild alarms, and fire-fighting, the city had fallen into silence, with the sodden smell of smoke from drenched ruins still hanging in the cold mist of the mid-October morning. The bombardment had ceased at dawn, giving notice of the closing in of the faithless invader over a half-dozen converging roads. People who were still abroad, scurrying about on last, desperate errands, vanished into their shuttered houses. So there was no one to see, or to stop, a little boy who ran out onto the Lille road, to a lone encounter with the German army that had marched through Roubaix.

In their retreat the Reserves had blown up the canal bridge, obliging the foe to stop and lay pontoons, so the western end of the broad highway was as deserted as any country lane, and there were no sounds at



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all except for the twittering of sparrows in the leafless hedges. But before Victor had walked a mile the earth began to tremble, the world was filled with a horrid tumult, and as the sun rose above the now smokeless chimneys of Roubaix something cosmic, like a tide, an avalanche, or a wall of waters from a broken dam, burst through the dissipating veil of fog.

Bearing down upon him was a forest of the spiked helmets and flashing lances of the Uhlans, who were mounted on big, clattering horses. But even in that petrifying instant he saw the piteous crowd of old people and children who had been gathered from the wayside to form a protecting screen for the invaders; and among them the black-coated curé of his home village, crucifix clasped to his breast and ascetic face uplifted. Pressed by cavalry and pricked by the bayonets of their guards, they ran and stumbled forward, and when they fell were jerked to their feet, trampled upon, or kicked into the ditch. His heart seemed to stop, from the shock, and then to swell until it filled his breast.

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It was an amazing thing to see that martial flood arrested and reduced to silence by an uplifted hand. He heard an order shouted in a strange, harsh tongue, and saw the imperious gesture that was directed toward himself; but his mind was so paralyzed that he stood like a post, until an orderly seized him and dragged him to the stirrup of a gray-cloaked and helmeted officer who loomed above him, scowling like some giant ogre of a folk-tale. To a question bawled in German he stammered, in terrified bewilderment:

“Pardon, monsieur!”

The Prussian condescended to use the language of the country, snarling it like an angry cur. “You come from Lille! Are there any French troops left in the city?”

“No, monsieur; they are all gone.”

The orderly, who had the boy's shoulder in an agonizing grip, interpreting the backward flip of his superior's thumb, sent the slight figure reeling against a telegraph-pole. The officer, whipping out a revolver, said, with a cold fury that chilled the blood:

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"Tell the truth, devil's imp, or I'll blow out your brains."

Victor turned his glazing eyes on the curé, who made the sign of the cross. With the comfort of religion to sustain him, the child faced death like any soldier on the battle-field.

"My father confessor will tell you that I do not lie, monsieur," he said, simply. He scarcely heard the sarcastic laugh, or the savage threat that, if one French soldier was discovered in Lille, he himself would be shot and his miserable village burned to the ground, for his dazed mind was slowly taking in what the priest's moving lips were repeating without sound:

*"Cherchez le grandpère!"*

Something had happened to his grandfather! Frantic with fear lest he be thrust into that crowd of harried captives and his search prevented, he broke from the orderly and tumbled down the embankment. A shot whistled by his head as he scrambled up, and another as he dodged between two tall factories. In a moment he was hidden from the highway. Coming out on a railway siding, he raced around a coal-

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yard and a string of grimy cottages. Returning to the Lille road, he gained the shelter of a strip of dense hedge. The long column was in motion again, and as that multitudinous, thundering tread drowned all other sounds, he ventured to part the tangle of thorny stems, at intervals, and to shout his grandfather's name.

He found the old man, at last, crumpled up as limp as the bundle of muddy rags which he appeared to be; but there were life and spirit in the battered veteran. His white mustache had not lost its jaunty, upward twirl nor his black eyes their sparkle, and at sight of his darling grandson his thin, brown face wrinkled into a charming smile.

“Make less noise, *cher petit*. I am supposed to be dead.”

Old Gabriel's back was to the road, and Victor lay concealed behind the hedge, so conversation was possible.

“Dear *grandpère*, are you hurt?”

“A bayonet-thrust—a few bruises—nothing of any consequence.” Blood was soaking into the earth under his wounded arm, a rib was fractured, and he could not

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move without pain, but his concern was for things of more importance. "The Reserves—did they escape from Lille?"

"Yes, *grandpère*, and the French and British are intrenched in Lens, La Bassée, and Armentières. To-morrow they will have strong forces up to Ypres and Dunkirk."

"*C'est bien!* We shall have a solid wall of defenders from Switzerland to the sea. I was alarmed about you, and came up the road to meet you. The brutes caught me, but they are of a stupidity. I played the ancient, too feeble to keep from under their horses, so they kicked me aside." He chuckled so over his clever deception of the enemy that Victor was reassured as to his injuries.

While that gray-green torrent swept by they were obliged to lie motionless. As best he could Victor described things that were amazing to the soldier who had been schooled in the comparatively primitive warfare of nearly a half-century before. The cavalry were the same, the gorgeous bands of musicians, and the singing regiments of infantry, lifting their booted feet

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high in the stamping goose-step. But a whole platoon of messenger-scouts were now mounted on motorcycles; batteries of viperish little machine-guns traveled on rubber-tired bicycle wheels; and cannon, whose vicious muzzles were fitted with cloth covers, were so enormous that the solid road gave way under the impact of their carriages. There were towering truck-loads of material for laying pontoon bridges; for setting up systems of field telephones; for stringing barbed-wire entanglements; for mending roads and constructing trenches. Companies of engineers and *sapeurs* marched with them. Long trains of baggage-wagons were eked out with handsome private motor-cars and delivery-vans stolen in Belgium. There were complete field hospitals with their personnel and equipment, a field post-office with clerks distributing the mail, and even field kitchens on wheels, with fat, white-capped cooks preparing breakfast. Above the flood of men and horses, transports and guns, blaring bands, fluttering colors, and the black eagles of Germany, a flock of yellow *Taubes* clicked and

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droned. And courier monoplanes, which had scouted over Lille and returned, darted about like dragon-flies, signaling messages that were greeted with ringing cheers.

The pageantry of war had been stage-managed to a paralyzing impressiveness which made the French and British armies appear like unorganized rabbles. The people of Roubaix had blanched and shuddered, then fled to the churches. "Someone must have been praying," Lord Kitchener is reported to have said, when the German armies, which had swept down on Paris like a forest fire, were hurled back from the Marne. It was all France. The nation was on its knees. A few, wrought up to exaltation and frenzy, saw visions. As the last of that column of organized frightfulness rumbled by in billowing clouds of dust, old Gabriel's eyes opened wide, and he cried out:

"Jeanne d'Arc! Jeanne d'Arc! *La patrie* perishes! Come back with all your angels and lead us!"

A gray pallor was spreading over his face when Victor pushed through the hedge and fled along the cherished highway of the

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Nord, which was now rutted with wheels, cut by iron-shod hoofs, and degraded with a litter of broken bottles and discarded loot. The home village was a desolation. Two houses had been unroofed by bombs; the gilded cross was gone from the wrecked belfry; maddened cows were tearing about trampled fields in which cart-dogs lay dead, and women were carrying water from the canal to extinguish a fire in a blazing stable. Madame Daulac had come up to the road to look for the missing members of her family. Kneeling in the dust, she held the disordered and hysterical little son in her arms while he sobbed out his incoherent story. A woman to meet even that disaster of invasion with an unflinching courage, she got up at once, quite composed, and led him to the house.

“No doubt *grandpère* is in a faint, *mon fils*. I can fetch him home in the wheelbarrow. What was the precious gift that Jeanne Marie had from Joseph to make her so happy? His *Croix de Guerre*? But no! That would not be sent to the convent. *Ma foi!* now, but we are a distinguished family to have four soldiers to give to



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France. And do not grieve for Poilu, dear child. The noble *chien* has been given the chance to die a soldier's death. Three of the dogs were shot when they defended their homes from a troop of Uhlans who broke through the hedge.” All the while that she was engaged efficiently in putting the exhausted child to bed, and heaping pillows and restoratives in the barrow, she related the details of the tragic affair without any sign of panic.

“*Les boches* were enraged to find their useful wine-seller gone; and they repaid his valuable services by looting his shop, which we had been guarding. The place was stripped clean, as by a plague of thirsty grasshoppers. Now we shall have to gather up the broken bottles which defile the road. The barbarians did what damage they could, in their haste, and took the curé for a hostage to insure our good behavior.” Her hands went up in an eloquent gesture. “*Ciel!* But a pestilent brute of an officer had a map of this insignificant village! The spy took a census under our very noses, with the name and possessions of every householder, and no

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one but *grandpère* even smelled the carrion at his work.”

She was back in an hour, with the veteran revived. No doctor was to be had, but madame was a veterinary of some skill, and, after all, the physical man is built much like an animal, so she was able to set the fractured rib and dress the bayonet-wound herself. Then she poulticed the bruises of grandfather and grandson, and put them into the state bed in the kitchen, where she could attend to their wants. After she had dosed them with hot milk and they had fallen asleep, she stood looking down upon them with grave concern. So old and frail a man would require months to recover from such injuries; but the delicate, sensitive boy might well have received the more serious hurt from the shock of his brutal treatment, for he lay blue-lipped and pallid, his dilated heart racing and pounding in his little breast.

Before nightfall Roubaix was under alien rule, with the civil authorities, parish priests, and prominent citizens held as hostages to assure the submission of the

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people. The big notices that were immediately posted had been prepared beforehand. Printed in bright red, in German, which few could read, they enumerated the many things that were now required or *verboten*. The banks were seized, gold and silver confiscated, and worthless paper notes put into circulation. At sunset a squad of gray-uniformed and helmeted soldiers, assigned to police duty, appeared on the Lille road. By the time the two who turned out at the crossing had reached the canal to begin the night patrol Madame Daulac had rescued the Tricolor which trailed from a ledge of the wrecked belfry, and was helping the women bury their murdered dogs in the fields which the devoted animals had tilled and guarded.

Almost at once the battle of the Lys swung northward, and developed into the indescribably confused and bloody conflict of the Yser, where fifteen German army corps were hurled against the twenty-five-mile triangle which was all of Belgium that remained unconquered. By that time the occupied region of northern France had become one vast concentration camp

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and military prison. Shut away on the west and south by the firmly intrenched German lines, it was cut off from the Belgian frontier by a wall of barbed-wire entanglements that was patrolled by German soldiers and their ferocious police-dogs.

No news besides that which emanated from Berlin reached Roubaix. But to his family and neighbors old Gabriel was able to describe the low, coast country, in which the liberty of the free peoples of the world was being defended by more men and more nations and races than had been brought together upon any battle-field in modern history. Netted with waterways, and dotted with towns, villages, stone farm-houses, and windmills, and crisscrossed with hedges, dikes, and railway embankments, all the way from the sleepy Flemish town of Nieuport, through Ypres to the Lys, it was admirably adapted to a stubborn defense. A man of vivid imagination, he fancied that he could hear the booming of the British naval guns which forced the enemy out of the sand-dunes. Then, when the German artillery was sud-

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denly silenced at Dixmude, he was sure that the brave Belgians had opened the sluices, repeating the historic feat of the Dutch, who drowned the invading army of the Spanish Duke of Alva. And when the Germans tried to break through at Ypres, it was plain to the people of Lille and Roubaix that the battle was moving southward and not westward. The great drive on the Channel ports, like the drive on Paris, had failed.

The armies in Flanders were in a primitive death-grapple, hundreds of thousands of men living in flooded trenches and fighting with mines, grenades, trench mortars, bayonets, clubs, and bare fists, with the Germans dropping bombs from airplanes, using dum-dum bullets, and bayoneting the wounded, when winter weather set in. Every morning after mid-November broke in a thick, cold fog, and storms of rain, sleet, and snow were driven before bleak winds from the North Sea. And all winter long there was fighting to the west, where the French, hanging on the fringes of Lille, made desperate efforts to recapture the city and to bring relief to a population

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that, robbed of food, textiles, and coal, neared the point of freezing and starvation before Christmas.

Even the caches of potatoes, roots, and orchard fruits in the farming villages had been uncovered by military search and inquisition. Madame Daulac still had a hidden store to share with less fortunate neighbors, some of whom were living in the cellars and ruins of their old stone houses. But to get enough nourishment for her invalids she was obliged to steal milk from her two thin cows, whose diminishing product had been commandeered for the table of a German officer.

That was attended with danger, for every one was now required to be under his own roof after dark; it was *verboten* to lock or bolt a door, and German soldiers had the right of entry at all hours. So madame never removed her clothing at night, but slept on a pallet of straw in the kitchen and chose the safest time for her nocturnal adventure. Once every hour the sentinels, who patrolled four miles of the canal-bank, met in the village street and passed each other. One proceeded up to

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the bridge at Roubaix, and the other covered the stretch of road to the barbed-wire barrier along the Belgian frontier.

On a night in December, when a storm of sleet was driving in before a bitter wind, and she lay listening to the cheerful ticking of the old clock which companioned many a dark and sleepless hour, she heard the soldiers, one of whom had a police-dog on a chain. An officer was with them, a young man of low rank and small importance, who had been assigned the unpleasant duty of inspecting scattered guards. He was angry, now, because no provision had been made for his comfortable return to Roubaix. Snarling a final profane order about the dog, that was to be taken up to the barbed wire, he swung off to the crossing, his booted feet ringing on the ice-glazed, cobbled path.

The sentinels parted, and their steps, too, died away. Now was the time! Madame was rising noiselessly when she heard the returning officer's arrogant tread. Flinging the door open, he pierced the darkness of the room with the ray from a pocket flash-light.

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“A lamp there!” His tall figure did not move from the doorway, in which he stood with revolver cocked until madame had complied, for the blond beast everywhere feared a trap. Striding into the room, he swore steadily in German while she made a smoking, sputtering fire of the water-soaked wreckage salvaged from the canal. He proposed to sleep there, while his hostess dried and pressed his uniform and polished his muddy boots. A contemptuous glance at the old man and the boy in the bed reminded him of an amusing incident.

“A villainous night, but not so bad for hunting small game. A boy tried to escape under the wires into Belgium. The dogs dragged him out. He fought like a wildcat, but the dogs tore him nearly to pieces before we shot him.”

There was a tense silence from the bed, where Victor mercifully lay in the profound sleep which marked his ailment; and old Gabriel clenched his hands and jaws in helpless horror and rage at these fiends who made criminals of their good dogs. Madame stood still, her hands folded, her eyes closed in her expressionless face.



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“*C'est la guerre!*” was the officer's light comment on the episode. This was war as Germany made it. “You see the efficiency of it, *nicht wahr?*” he inquired. Madame made no reply. Incensed by her proud disdain, his demand held a threat—“You have wine!” It was well known in Berlin that the degenerate French peasant swam in champagne.

“A bottle or two of *vin ordinaire*, monsieur,” madame replied, evenly.

“Swill for pigs at ten sous!” he snarled like a surly cur, and he took a flask of brandy from his own pocket. Madame gasped. She had never seen this fiery *eau de vie* used for anything but medicine—a teaspoonful in a glass of milk, to rekindle the dying spark of life. As the man was already more than a little drunk, she ventured a word of warning:

“It goes to the head, monsieur.”

“German heads are strong,” he boasted. But one drink leaped to his brain like fire, and made him swell up with importance and flame into anger. “And address me as ‘*Excellenz*,’ *femelle*.” The epithet was an insult, for it was used only in

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referring to the sex of hens and farm animals.

A mere lieutenant, he had no right to the title he assumed, and madame was adroit in withholding it from the beast.

“Pardon, monsieur, I did not observe it.”

“Observe what?”

“The excellency, monsieur.”

He was too drunk to understand anything so subtle, and madame’s voice was as bland as oil. He desired nothing, now, but sleep.

“Take those swine out of the bed!”

She was lifting old Gabriel to the pallet on the floor when Victor, started from sleep by a shot, cried out in terror. “Be tranquil, *mon fils*,” she said, and she turned a quiet gaze upon the trembling boy. He was not to pay the brute the compliment of being afraid of him.

The clock attracting the attention of the fellow by its cheerful ticking, he had fired a bullet from his revolver into the quaint, painted dial. With a snap, a whir, and a death-rattle of the broken spring, the ancient timepiece died.

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"That is how a Prussian officer is taught to shoot. You admire my skill, *nicht wahr?*" Reloading the weapon twice, and taking deliberate, if unsteady, aim, he shattered every one of the beautiful, old-blue, Dutch landscape tiles which framed the fireplace. His eyes bloodshot now and full of malicious laughter, he lifted the delicate bisque image of the Virgin from the mantel, spat upon it, and let it fall to the floor. With a tinkling crash it lay in fragments on the stone hearth. While he staggered across the room and flung himself upon the clean bed in his wet clothing and mired boots, madame stood with head and hands drooping, like any Mater Dolorosa. Once she had believed that such sacrilege could not go unpunished of God. But the curé, innocent of any offense, had been shot in Lille, and the village church was now a kennel for police-dogs. Infernal powers were immune in a desecrated and ruined world.

The intruder fell at once into a sodden sleep that would last for hours. Madame was able to sweep up the broken tiles, and to gather the fragments of the sacred

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image into a box without disturbing him. Then she helped Victor, and carried *grand-père* to an upper chamber, and went out to the stable for a *litre* of milk and for two eggs which she had concealed. After she had given her invalids the nocturnal meal that was keeping them alive, she sat on the top step of the stairs. There were still some hours of the night during which she must keep a vigil.

The most difficult thing for an industrious French peasant woman to bear is idleness. The wool had been shipped to Germany, and for weeks there had been no yarn for knitting. Madame's need of employment for her hands was now so great that she raveled an old stocking, wound the crinkled yarn into a ball, and reknitted it. The lamp went out, for lack of oil, and the fire died down to bits of charred wood. The house was a chill, black void, as silent as a tomb. Now and then a dull explosion was heard from the north or west, a toneless stab of sound which tortured even the village dogs into a whimpering half-consciousness. Madame never stirred. In the darkness she knitted

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steadily, and held her mind *en repos* for the emergency.

The fearful sequel came at dawn. The light of a fog, milk-white and opaque, was beginning to outline the one small window which still had glass panes, when the officer, staggering up from the bed with a curse, and holding his head between his hands, rushed out of the house. Madame, coming down to shut the door, in the hope that he would be unable to find his way back, saw him, a spectral shape, weaving an uncertain way across the street and up the sleet-glazed dike. Then, as furtively as any hunted animal dodging into a hole, she was within, leaning for support against the closed door. A figure as shadowy as any ghost, in the fog, she had seen him lose his footing. Without a cry or a struggle, so swiftly did it happen, he slid into the canal.

Mother of God; what was to be done? Her natural impulse was to go to the German commandant of Roubaix with her story of the accident. But it was the policy of frightfulness never to believe in innocence, but to seize upon any excuse

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for crime against hapless captives. As the only witness, she would be executed for a “treasonable” murder, and her family destroyed. Oh, the head of *grandpère*, and of Victor against a wall! And if the body were found here in the canal, the village would be obliterated in an orgy of massacre and burning.

With recovery from the first shock her courage stiffened into resolution. The dead officer must not be found! No one knew that he had slept in her house. The sentinels had seen him start for Roubaix and, at least a mile distant on their routes of patrol, they could not have heard the shots. Slipping out to kitchen doors, she summoned the market-women. Favored by the blanket of fog, which made any one invisible at twenty yards, they dragged the body from the water with their garden rakes. And in that first terrible winter of German occupation, when old people and young children died of their privations, there was always a fresh grave in the churchyard. One had been dug the evening before, flush with the wall that separated God’s acre from the service alley of a

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factory, and left open for the funeral in the morning.

Experts with pick and spade, the women soon dug the outer side of the grave two feet deeper, and from this lower level they made a lateral opening, tunneling under the wall. Pushing the body outside consecrated ground, and ten feet deep under undisturbed cobbles, they filled in the shelf and the grave bottom. Later in the day, after official inspection, they buried an old peasant who had died of “malnutrition.” Before nightfall the country was being scoured, the waterways dragged, and a house-to-house inquisition and search conducted, but nothing was discovered as to the fate of a Prussian officer who was missing.

With the extension of the work of the Belgian Relief Commission to Lille in April, the decimated population of the richest region of France was living on the charity of the world, and hearing their jailers boast of great victories and of ingenious and incredible crimes. The Germans were bombing open cities from the skies, bombarding the cathedral of Rheims,

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torpedoing passenger-ships, and drenching the trenches before Ypres with poison gas which they had made in the great chemical works of Lille.

But with nature repairing the breaches of war, the peasants on their small plots of fertile land could not be altogether hopeless. Grass was springing in the pastures for famishing cows, green shoots closing the gaps in broken hedges, and blossoming fruit-trees giving the year's first assurance of the autumn harvest. With the return of the nightingale to bubble its joy from the new-leaving lilacs, the market-women had the blessed relief of accustomed work among growing things. In order to stimulate farming the Germans promised these toilers enough of their own produce to enable them to live.

It made madame happy to see *grandpère* out of doors again and unconquered by the disaster of advancing age and infirmities. The Alsatian veteran refused to be useless or to sink into depression. To the market-women he explained the great idea of the Commune, and persuaded them to pool their diminishing resources of dogs, carts,



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tools, seed, and labor. Convinced that the war would be long, but that it could end only in the crushing of militarism, and biding his own opportunity to strike another blow at the enemy before he died, he had but one anxiety.

Victor had been enrolled in the National School which had been reopened in Roubaix, with certain “kultural” improvements which included the study of German. Every day before entering and leaving the city he was obliged to stop at the bridge and show his identification card. Several times his books and clothing were searched by bullying guards, and there were alarming stories abroad of children being taken into the guard-houses and stripped, on the absurd suspicion of having messages in secret writing on their bodies. Stories of torture and mutilation could not be confirmed, and they were not credited except by the hysterical. But every one, now, was liable to be subjected to indignities and indecencies which could occur only to the mind of a barbarian, and there was no way in which the boy could be protected. Not until June, however,

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was he the first victim of a new campaign of frightfulness that was intended so to break the spirit of the people of northern France that they would clamor for a German peace.

In his weeks in bed Victor had shot up, tall and thin; and, like every other child in the region who had survived that winter of terror and famine, he appeared to be older than his years. One day a guard professed to be skeptical as to his age.

“I am thirteen, monsieur. It is on the card.” He shrank from the lash of the loud, insulting laugh, but hastened to give an assurance that must convince any one. “The record was taken from the parish register of baptisms, monsieur.”

“Any rascally priest vill write down a lie and sprinkle it mit holy water. You are fifteen. Soon you vill be running away to the French army, *nicht wahr?*”

“No, monsieur, I would be of no use in an army for five years.”

The fellow was looking at the boy's slim, brown hands. By and by they would have the delicate strength and quick accuracy of movement which make the

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French soldier the best artilleryman and aviator in the world. Seeing his interest, and wishing to placate his tormentor and be on his way home, Victor made polite conversation. "I have the talent for chemistry, monsieur."

"So! Maybe you make the poison gas to kill good Germans! Maybe not! Here—hold this—it's heavy—mit both hands, not to let it fall."

He thrust into the unsuspecting child's careful grasp what looked to be a package of tinned meat, with a cotton wick protruding from a nail-hole. Striking a match, he lighted the fuse. There was a flash of flame, then a sputtering within like that of a firecracker about to go off. Alarmed by that, and by the rapid retreat of the guard, Victor flung the grenade from him with a cry of pain as it exploded and tore a great hole in the floor of the bridge. He heard the man laugh as he ran out onto the Lille road.

Old Gabriel fell into such a murderous rage when he saw his darling little grandson's lacerated hands that he was in bed again from exhaustion. But madame had

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neither words nor tears when she dressed the injuries. Here was a horror deeper than the grave, a grief more bitter than death. Dead, the boy would be safe with God. But here he was in hourly danger of mutilation, or of deportation into slavery in Germany. While his hands were healing of an “accident” about which no questions were asked, nor complaint made, Victor himself came to the decision. He announced his intention of trying to escape to the British camp in Armentières, which was less than ten miles distant, in the valley of the Lys.

“But the dogs—the police-dogs, *mon fils?*” Madame’s heart all but stopped beating. She could have taken him into her arms, and smothered him into peaceful death upon the bosom that had nourished him, rather than let him risk such horrors.

French boys are not athletic, but, because of his grandfather’s insistence, Victor had learned to swim, after a fashion.

“So you see, *maman*, before I reach the barrier I can drop into the canal and swim under the wires.”

“*Mon petit*,” said old Gabriel, “you

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would have to dive, and hold your breath. The wires trail in the water.”

“Yes, *grandpère*.” Victor blanched and gulped down the lump in his throat, but he never faltered. “I may drown, but the dogs will not get me.”

The perilous chance had to be taken, but the boy would not have to go out into the world quite penniless. Madame had a few five-franc pieces which she had managed to conceal from the Germans when they ransacked the village in search of the ten thousand francs which they levied upon the twenty households. These she sewed into a belt.

Once under the wires, Victor would find friendly people in the farm-houses along the canal. And at Armentières the British soldiers might find room for him in a military train to Bailleul. From that quaint old Flemish town he could see the ten-mile range of lofty hills which, springing abruptly from a country that was as flat as a floor, formed a defense for Ypres on the south that had been firmly held against every assault. The Mont des Chats at the western extremity of the

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range was a landmark, and the holy hill of Flanders. More than five hundred feet high, its green crest was crowned with the great white monastery of the Trappist Brothers. On that fairy peak it was like a castle of dreams, whether swirled about with veils of mist or with all its pointed windows and delicate spires gleaming in the sun. The entire journey was a matter of only twenty miles, more or less, and Jeanne Marie would be at the end of it in the hospital of the *Croix Rouge*, or, if she were not there, the good monks would tell Victor what to do.

They waited for a night when a new moon went down early, in a sky of gusty winds and dark clouds that threatened rain. If he should be drowned, madame and *grandpère* would never know, for his body, drifting down the Lys and the Scheldt, would come to rest among the noble ships which were rotting at their docks in the idle harbor of Antwerp. And if he won his way through, they could not know that until the war was over. In the dark house they knelt and prayed fervently that the good French soldiers might come back

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and drive *les boches* to the Rhine, before all the martyred families of Belgium and northern France were scattered and dead. Then they talked cheerfully up to the last moment, embraced and kissed one another bravely, and said: “*Au revoir! Bonne chance!*” Madame and *grandpère* did not even dare watch Victor from the doorway when he slipped out and vanished into the night.

The landscape was dim, and any features which might have been distinct were confused with the shadows of flying clouds and swaying poplars. So a furtive little boy, stealing along the hedges, dodging from shelter to shelter, and dropping from the dike into the canal, was but another shadow to the German patrol. Like a particle of rain falling from heaven into the sea, the forlorn child slipped from the arms of love into the oblivion of the homeless refugee.

## CHAPTER VI

### FIELDS OF HONOR

**T**HREE years after Victor's escape the good French soldiers had not come back. Instead, the plight of the people of northern France had been made desperate by the collapse of Russia. With hordes of German soldiers released for fighting on the western front, the outnumbered armies of the Allies were able to no more, in the spring of 1918, than to hold their line unbroken while they retreated before smashing drives.

During the equinoctial storms of March a new invasion swept across Belgium, jammed the mired roads of the Nord, and crowded into Lille and Roubaix for the great drive in Flanders, which was intended to capture Ypres and Dunkirk from the south. The region was now one vast military encampment and base of sup-



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plies. The farm-houses, and then the stables, were taken to furnish quarters for enemy troops. With the few wretched people and domestic animals left in the village, madame and old Gabriel were turned out to sleep in the open cart-sheds and half-frozen fields. From their foul and trampled dooryard they saw an army of half a million men massed in the valley of the Lys, along the short front which runs from La Bassée, west of Lille, to the Messines Ridge below Ypres.

Nothing could live under such a deluge of artillery fire as swept the low terrane north of the river bare of towns, villages, and farmsteads. Within forty hours the British were forced out of shell-crumbled, gas-drenched Armentières, and by the end of a week the enemy had driven a wedge ten miles deep across the flats to the smoking ruins of Bailleul and scaled the heights of Messines on the eastern flank. With his own forces and Belgium's brave little army behind him in danger of being trapped in the small triangle of lowland along the sea, General Sir Douglas Haig stopped on the long range of hills which

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guards Ypres and Dunkirk, and made the historic decision: "We retreat no farther. Here we fight or die."

They fought there, and died, and, still fighting and dying, were forced back over half the hills by sheer weight of guns and numbers. Midway of the range the Germans were rolling up lofty Mont Kemmel like a tide when French troops arrived to stiffen the defense.

In this fourth year of the war, France was being drained dry of its manhood. With middle-aged men and boys in the trenches, most of the hard and dangerous work in the rear was done by worn-out veterans of the Territorial Reserves. It was they who kept the roads and the lines of communication in repair, and who brought the supply columns up to the front by night. Darkness, however, afforded them little protection, for the highways of France had been mapped and ranged by German spies long before the war. So they were always under fire of high-explosive and gas shell, and on moonlighted nights they were bombarded from the skies.

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With horses, mules and motors, wagons, trucks and ambulances, they kept rations and ammunition moving up to the trenches, and the wounded passing back to the hospitals. These were obliged to stop at the base of the hill and unload into carts, for dogs could go up and down steep and narrow paths which no horse could travel. So the task of Monsieur Henri and Poilu lay on the northern slope of Mont Kemmel, immediately behind the trenches.

No one would have known the two who had so gallantly led a machine-gun battery out of the citadel of Lille. The dog bore scars of battle on his tawny hide—patches burnt bare with powder, a ragged ear, a shrapnel wound in his lean flank, and the deep, jagged tears of an escape through rusty barbed wire. Because of a deed of sagacity, courage, and devotion, Poilu's name had been entered in the Golden Book of Fighting Dogs, and the Collar of the Wise and Brave had been bestowed upon him in a public decoration of war-dogs in Paris. Should he fall, he would be buried to the rolling of drums, and his collar sent

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to his mistress to be kept as a badge of his sacrifice for *la patrie*.

When the crew of an advance-guard battery were killed, Poilu had raced back to the trenches and saved his gun from capture. Then through a storm of bullets he had returned, to lie in a shell-hole beside his wounded master all day, and to guide the stretcher-bearers who ventured out into No Man's Land after nightfall. Born of an iron race and still in the prime of life, no task or danger daunted his stout heart, and after a night's grueling labor of pulling four-hundred-pound loads up and down a steep hill he was only reasonably tired.

But his master—the once big, blond Fleming, who had counted confidently upon having twenty years in which to work and lay up *gros sous* for old age—was now but a bit of human wreckage. A man of forty-six, he looked to be more than sixty, with his stooping shoulders, dangling arm, and the whitening beard which lay in the hollow of his chest. Living in the poisonous mud of the flooded trenches, and lying out on the frozen marsh in the first winter

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before Ypres, had doubled him up with rheumatism, and an expanding bullet through the shoulder had paralyzed his left arm.

He was given an honorable discharge, but it was impossible for him to return to his home in the region occupied by the enemy; and, like many another disabled patriot in those days so perilous for France, he had refused exemption from further military service. With the help of his "noble *chien*," Monsieur Henri could still count for more than many another man in the transport service, so he and Poilu were attached to the French army on the Aisne. There, in the long and desperate fighting for the *Chemin des Dames*, he was caught in such a violent bombardment of a supply-depot that shell shock impaired his memory.

This calamity troubled him very little, for he had no knowledge of the situation of his family to torment him, and his simple, non-speculative mind found contentment in the present duty, which was to drive *les boches* from the soil of France. Besides, he had not lost his identity. His

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name and the name of his village were on the discharge which he sewed into an inside pocket for safekeeping. When the war was over he had only to show the paper at the nearest railway station in order to be sent to his home, "somewhere in France," and there, since every natural man of his age had a *bonne femme* and children, he would find warm, human relationships, and soon weave himself again into the satisfying pattern of life that had been designed for him by *le bon Dieu*.

So it was as a stranger in his own land that Monsieur Henri came back to Flanders. But the low country, which spread from this barrier of hills to the sea, had a friendly welcome for him, for here were things of the subconscious memory, vaguely familiar and comforting. He marched through the Flemish market-town of Hazebrouck, to find red-roofed farming villages, barge-laden canals, windmills, and bare little stone churches tipped with gilded crosses and guarding their green sanctuaries of the peaceful dead.

Since the first year of the war the people of this district had lived within sound of

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the battles on the Yser and the Lys, but they went about every sort of work undisturbed. Market-carts were on the poplar-bordered roads, toilers in the fields, and wherever a clear stream rippled across a meadow a group of merry washerwomen knelt on the stones and splashed their linen in the water.

In the flagged kitchen of a farm-house near the base of Mont Kemmel, where Monsieur Henri had his quarters, and a bustling woman in cap and sabots cooked his dinner and called him *mon ami*, he had such a feeling of home that he became consciously homesick—suffering from the *mal du pays* of the French peasant for the village of his birth. After a night of toil on the steep slope of Mont Kemmel, which springs five hundred feet above the plain, he wanted nothing so much as to sit by that hearth, eat the simple food, listen to homely talk and to the cheerful ticking of an old clock, and then go to sleep on clean straw in an heirloom of a great, carved bed.

But Poilu was of another mind. The usually phlegmatic dog had turned eager

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and restless. When the last load had been discharged he started up to the hilltop, so sure was his instinct for direction. As plainly as any dog could speak, in confident barks, excited waggings of an abbreviated tail, and the entreaty of soft brown eyes, he said:

"Let us go home, master! This is the way!"

"Well, well, *mon brave*, what would you have?" The slow-witted man was puzzled by the dog's behavior, but this faithful friend was to be indulged in a whim, so he followed the exuberant animal up to the crest.

Had another peaceful Flemish landscape opened to the view Poilu might have plunged down the slope and started home across twenty miles of low country. But the terraces of this southern rise were gullied with the trenches of the defenders, and overlooked a wide desolation. It was as though fire and flood, earthquake and a meteoric storm, had swept the valley of the Lys. Blasted and uprooted trees defined the shell-pitted roads; chimneys stood stark above heaps of rubble and



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dust; splintered bridges choked the streams, and water pouring through broken dikes had filled the depressions. Tangles of barbed wire, abandoned guns, wagons, trucks, wrecked trains, dead horses—every sort of abomination lay sinking in the foul mud.

Bailleul at their feet was a shamble, and Armentières on the rim of the visible world was a black ruin, half submerged in the spreading waters of the Lys. The river that had flowed so silverly between its grassy banks had been trampled out into stagnant lakes which lay stranded in a brown, polluted morass. To the allied armies intrenched on the clean hills, it was a grim satisfaction to hold the Hun in that festering cul-de-sac of his own making throughout a hot, rainy summer.

In profound discouragement, Poilu dropped between the shafts of his long, low, rubber-tired cart, whose corner uprights served to hold solid sides or to suspend a stretcher. He knew a battle-field. Across those fields of death there was no thoroughfare, even for a dog. And such

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a horrible stench arose from the rotting waste that only seasoned soldiers could have imagined that a great army lay encamped there.

It did not surprise these veterans when, with deafening explosions from guns hidden in the folds of the captured hills to the east, a curtain of steel was dropped on the lowest terrace of Mont Kemmel. Behind that barrage, misty gray-green shapes, like the unclean ghosts of the enemy slain, rose from behind dikes and hedges, and clambered out of slimy ditches, cellars, and shell-craters. Forming into a series of moving walls, they charged up the hill. Wave after wave they rolled up in massed attack, to be met by a withering fire from machine-guns, to break in bloody foam, fall back, and sweep upward again.

Monsieur Henri and Poilu slid backward to a safe level before rising to their feet. They were starting down the hill when two soldiers ran up a communicating trench with a British officer on a stretcher. One exclaimed:

*"Mon Dieu!* No ambulance is on the road! The head wound is urgent. Is this

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friend of France to perish, with a base hospital in Hazebrouck?”

Poilu had stopped, alert, for the trained war-dog has the automatic intelligence of the soldier. To his own astonishment at his unaccountable knowledge of the country, Monsieur Henri said:

“The dog is fatigued, but he could take the *blessé* the five kilometers to the field hospital, in the monastery on the Mont des Chats.”

In a moment the stretcher was hung from the uprights, the master was in the driver's seat, and they were off with their precious freight, following a wild path midway along the rise, which only a goat or a sure-footed dog could have traveled. Behind them the battle surged higher up Mont Kemmel, and people in the fields below, which basked in the sunshine of the spring morning, stopped from their work to look up apprehensively. There were cries of horror and shaken fists when, in sheer malice, shell were dropped into the garden of an old convent orphanage on Mont Locre.

Only farther to the west, in that violated

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landscape, was there still serenity. Three miles away, the monastery was a celestial vision, its white walls, towers, and spires lifted to the blue dome of Heaven, and gleaming like pearl through trailing wisps of vapor. Monsieur Henri had some association with this holy hill of Flanders, but the baffling memory escaped him.

With a word now and then, Poilu guided himself, so his master looped the reins around an upright and used his one hand to steady the stretcher. The dog traveled in a rapid, swinging trot, his splayed feet gripping the rough ground, his broad shoulders crashing through thickets and breasting the foaming little hill streams. He rounded the cones of Mont Locre, Mont Noir, and Mont Rouge, and dipped into the ravine cut by the River Douve on its way to the Lys. He may have rattled over the secret grave of Prince Max of Hesse, whom the monks had buried there in the first autumn of the war.

From their bullet-scarred walls and shattered windows the Trappist Brothers had watched a skirmish between British and German cavalry on the slope of the

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Mont des Chats. Among the mortally wounded left on the field by the hasty retreat of the enemy was this handsome young cousin of the Kaiser. The monks refused to reveal his burial-place, until the Germans had gone home and made restitution for their crimes in Belgium and France. It was feared that, in revenge, they would bombard this beautiful old religious establishment which, with the exception of one wing and the chapel, had been turned into a military hospital.

After passing an ancient windmill, a grove of gracious trees, and skirting a high brick wall, Poilu turned in through a gate of mercy that had been open to wounded friend and foe for three and a half years. The spacious white buildings, orchards, gardens, and vineyards, rimmed and vaulted with blue oceans of air, formed an island of peace and beauty. The old soldier took off his battered helmet and crossed himself when, in answer to the call of a silver-toned bell, a procession of white-cowled monks passed along a sunny arcade to the chapel.

When orderlies had carried away the

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wounded officer, Poilu dropped, panting with fatigue, in the paved courtyard. Monsieur Henri unhooked the trace and reins and pushed the cart free, so the dog could rest. Then he fetched a basin of water from a fountain, and went to the refectory to draw their morning rations. Sitting under the chestnut trees, they ate their breakfasts. By and by they would be shown a place to sleep. And here they could remain all day, for not until night-fall were they due at some point on the road to meet the supply-column from Hazebrouck.

Orderlies appeared, wheeling the convalescent out to the lawns and orchards, and nurses of the *Croix Rouge* to make the patients comfortable. One who was all grace of movement and a dark, bright beauty gave them a friendly nod and a smile, grave and sweet, in passing. It was such as this crippled old peasant and his gaunt, battle-scarred dog, now, who were defending the daughters of France, and every one paid tribute to their courage and devotion.

"*Bon jour, my soldiers,*" was all she

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said, but Poilu heaved up from the ground, and stood trembling and gazing after her. Sniffing where she had trodden, he padded along the flagged path, and when she reappeared in the doorway of a building he ran to meet her.

“Why, no! It cannot be Poilu!” she said. With a joyous “Woof!” he flung himself upon her. “But it is! It is!” she cried, in glad wonder, and she put her arms around the neck of the happiest warden in France.

Then seeing the bewildered man stumbling to his feet, she ran and clasped his useless arm with both her hands. “*Mon père! Mon père!* I should have known you at once but for your great beard.” And the divine sweetness of it was that she would not have known him at all—her tall, strong, blond Fleming of a father, now so broken, so old and shrunken and crippled and gray, at forty-six. Only her pride in him and her bravery kept back the tears.

“Is it *ma fille?*” he asked, wistfully.

“Yes, yes, yes!” And there was the sparkling vivacity that was her gift from

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the greataunt Suzette of tragic fate, and the quick laughter that bubbled up like the water in the fountain. "I am your daughter, Jeanne Marie. Am I so changed?"

"I have not the memory. Shell shock—" He was afraid that she would be abashed, would draw back from one who felt himself a stranger; but to a nurse of the *Croix Rouge* that was but a matter of course.

"*C'est la guerre!*" she said, cheerfully, and with a charming gesture of dismissing a thing about which there was no need that he should be distressed. "Everything comes back, in time; or all at once if there is another shock. *Cher papa*, you are to kiss me now and remember me afterward."

Astonished that one so exquisite could belong to him, he kissed the bright angel and felt as though he had died and waked up in heaven.

With but a moment of time between duties, she led him to a row of blossoming pear trees which, set in a clipped hedge, formed a garden wall, and began at once to recreate for him the dear, lost life.



“POILU”—A DOG OF ROUBAIX!

“The pear trees in such a hedge at home are in bloom now, and *maman* and *grand-père* are there, waiting for us to return. Poilu was *maman*’s cart-dog. *Ma foi!* but she will be the proudest woman in France when he goes home with his collar of honor!” and Jeanne Marie gave a droll imitation of Madame Daulac’s most engaging mannerism.

“And *le petit* Victor! Not even *grand-père*, who adores him, will know Victor, now that he is a great boy of sixteen who has been seeing the world. When the war is over he will return from London. *Mon père*”—and she squeezed his arm ecstatically—“we shall be a family, all together again in the ancient farm-house—all, except my Joseph.” She showed him her wedding and betrothal rings, and Joseph’s *Croix de Guerre*, which she wore pinned over her heart. “He perished on the field of honor, in the first months of the war. But we shall have something more of him than a memory—” With eyes as soft as a Madonna’s she looked at her watch, and sprang up in alarm. “I must go to my *blessés*. Stay here where I can

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find you, and I will come again." With her arms around his neck, she pulled his head down and whispered into his great beard, "I shall have a dear secret to confide."

She was gone, leaving Poilu wriggling with delight from his nose to his tail, and Monsieur Henri in a state of dazed happiness. It had been in the man's mind to ask her where, in all France, that family was to be reunited, but, always slow and scant of speech, and confused by the more gifted, he had missed any opportunity to question her. She may have meant to prevent him, for now, as he looked down upon Poilu, and thought of the comfort and the homesickness which he had so strangely found together in the farmhouse kitchen, he understood the dog's curious behavior of the morning.

This was his own country! His father and his wife were over there to the south, behind the army of *les boches*. His young son was a refugee in a foreign land. His family was scattered, prisoners of hate, victims of nameless infamies, dead, lost to memory. His ancestral home may have

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been blown to atoms, and he not even a whole man to defend his own! He clenched his fist and broke into the sweat of anguish. In the twisted heap of a crippled man, he lay face downward in the grass. Sensing his master's misery, Poilu pressed close until the old soldier fell into the sleep of exhaustion.

The sun had set when Monsieur Henri awoke to find that Jeanne Marie had been there and left a tray of food, and a basin of bread and soup for the dog. Mont Kemmel had been captured, and the battle had spread westward to Mont Rouge! The bursting shell made a brilliant display of fireworks for two miles along the lower slope of the range. Then the explosions paled when the full moon—red, like the harvest moon—shouldered into view over the Messines Ridge, and the clouds in the zenith were suddenly stained a dusky orange and fiery rose by reflection when the convent orphanage on Mont Locre burst into flames.

The nuns could be seen shepherding their flock of homeless children along the wild path to the monastery, which was now no refuge for any one. To pious

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peasants who looked up to the sanctuary on the holy hill, from humble doorways a dozen miles away, and saw it shining, luminous, ineffable, in all that flood of light, it was a lantern of God hung in the vault of night. But to the Hun it was but another ancient shrine of peace and beauty to be destroyed. The monastery was under bombardment. For no military advantage, but with the malice of the jungle, the big guns would now batter at the gates, the gables, the towers, and spires, until all their stone lace was shattered, and toppled into pits of burning.

There was no panic in the monastery, although a shell carried away a sail of the stone windmill which, for five hundred years, had pumped water and ground grain for consecrated men; a chestnut tree leaped into a torch, and a breach was blown in the high brick wall. Lights shone steadily from the pointed windows of the hospital wards, white figures flitted along the corridors, and the monks, coming up from their labors in scented gardens, orchard, and vineyard, went in procession to their last devotions in the chapel.

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When they had eaten their suppers Monsieur Henri harnessed Poilu to his cart—a matter of snapping the trace and reins to the collar. The disappointed man had given up the hope of seeing Jeanne Marie again, when he saw her running to the gate to direct the nuns and children to go on, around the hill, and down the western slope to the road. She waved to him to wait as she started back across a moonlighted space of lawn. He had the "other shock" when she disappeared behind a crashing shell, a burst of flame, and a spouting column of earth.

With a hoarse shout he plunged into the crater which had opened, and scrambled up through a cloud of dust and acrid smoke. In the instant in which he expected to see her face like a star fallen upon the grass, he remembered everything; and when she flung herself upon his breast with a cry, "*Mon père*, are you hurt?" he knew her for the little girl who used to run up to the Lille road to meet him, when he returned from his work in Roubaix.

"*Petit bijou!*" was all he could say, but she kissed him in a transport of joy. A

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vivid sprite of a child, all sparkling gaiety, "Little Jewel" had been her father's pet name for her.

"Observe, now, how the memory revives!" she said. She knelt on the grass to fit a package into the leather messenger-pocket that was riveted to the top of Poilu's collar of honor. "*Mon père*, I shall not see you again, but here are photographs of every one, letters from Victor, and a letter which I wrote when you were asleep, to console you. They are to be kept for *maman* and *grandpère*." She snapped the fastenings securely, and with her hand on the pocket admonished the dog that this was a sacred trust. "*A la garde, Poilu!*" He stood as stanchly as any soldier, ready to guard it with his life.

"We must work all night, to carry the *blessés* on their mattresses down the hill, to meet the ambulances and motor-lorries that are coming to the rescue from Haze-brouck. Some are too ill to be moved, but the good Brothers will be with us to comfort the dying."

At the gate they parted with an "*Au*

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*revoir! Bonne chance!*" the brave formula of farewell that was used all over France. The French everywhere, such was the national *élan*, sped one another to the supreme sacrifice with a simple: "Good-by! Good luck!"

On the way down to his post of duty Monsieur Henri planned that he would draw their morning rations at the nearest field kitchen. With Poilu he intended to slip into an old shell-hole of the first year of the war, half-way down the slope of Mont Locre. In that yearning for silence and privacy which sometimes overtakes the war-weary soldier, he and Poilu had lain there once, for a half-day, in the wild shrubbery. The place was already a green jungle, populous with birds and starred with dewy blossoms. In that sylvan retreat he meant to read the letters, feast his eyes on the photographs, and share whatever memories came flooding back, with the faithful dog who had grown up on the family hearth and into the family affections.

But that happy program was not carried out, for on that moonlighted night the

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enemy made a supreme effort to take Mont Lore by storm. While fresh waves of infantry rolled up over the trenches, the transport service in the rear was bombed by raiding airplanes, drenched with gas-shell, and shrapnel and high-explosive shell came hurtling over from the hills to the east. Crowded as that military road was with arriving and departing supply-columns, men and horses and dogs were killed, wagons and ambulances smashed, and ammunition-dumps blown up, but with the briefest interruptions that desperate work was continued.

At sunrise the last supply-column had left the road and was racing back to Hazebrouck, but the cart-drivers were still on the hillside with their dogs, discharging their loads, when the defenders swarmed up out of the trenches, shouting to them to run. *Les boches* were coming! Turning, they faced the enemy with bayonets, revolvers, and clubbed guns.

The order to run was not for the unconquered Fleming. With three motions he freed Poilu; and with a heave of the shoulder he turned the cart over on its side.



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The dog dropped beside his master, behind that frail barricade. With one good arm and a cart-load of grenades Monsieur Henri joined in the battle. He was a whole man again, avenging his own! Like a terrier he released the pins from the grenades with his teeth. Rising to take aim, he hurled the missiles at massed ranks of the foe. He had a grenade in his hand when, with a bullet through his chest, he crumpled across Poilu.

The dog struggled from under the man's dead weight. He had seen soldiers fall in such limp heaps before, had seen them trampled upon and bayoneted while they still breathed. Gripping the coat collar between his iron jaws, he dragged his helpless master out of danger. Foot by foot he pulled him down the slope and into the sylvan shell-hole. There he lay panting from the exertion, and frantically licking his master's face.

To his delight, Monsieur Henri presently opened his eyes. The entire hillside was now a swirling mass of battling men, the defenders falling back slowly and fighting a rear-guard action to protect the retreat,

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while a new line of defense was being formed behind hedges, dikes, and the railway embankment in the fields. With shouts of victory the Germans were rushing captured machine-guns and trench mortars over the crest of the hill, and setting them up behind every sheltering bush and hummock. The master's thought was for his faithful dog, when stamping feet and the rattle of a light gun-carriage approached their hiding-place.

"Poilu, thou art dead!"

The dog dropped as though he had been shot. As two gray-uniformed men broke through the thicket, Monsieur Henri hurled the grenade. The noise of the explosion was faint in his ears. He seemed to sink away through infinite space. With a shuddering sigh and a gush of bloody foam to his lips, he lay still.

Two other guns were mounted in the brush on the edge of the crater, and fired for an hour, while Poilu lay as motionless as his master. Not until they had been moved forward to new positions, and the battle had been forced down to the road, did he rise and stretch his stiff limbs. He

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pushed his nose into his master's face, thinking that the man, too, was very cleverly “playing dead.” But the face was cold and white. There was no sight in the glazed eyes which stared at the sun; no warm breath from the stained and parted lips. Dumb with grief, Poilu lay down, with his big muzzle on the still breast of his master.

In the evening, when the exhausted armies rested from that awful carnage, the birds returned to their nests in the shrubbery. With excited flyings about and indignant comments they fed their crying broods; and there was much chirping and fluttering before all the little feathered families settled down to sleep. The moon shone dim through a pall of mist and smoke. Star shell, bursting high, lighted up the No Man's Land of the hillside, where the wounded lay untended by the hand of mercy, and the dead unburied. From the odorous thicket a nightingale poured forth his tender lament, “Here lies Pierrot!”

It was two days before the Allies, reinforced with infantry and artillery, were

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able to hurl the Germans back over the top of Mont Lore, and down into the rotting morass out of which they had climbed at such a terrible cost. After nightfall stretcher-bearers, and soldiers with picks and spades, searched the battlefield, to rescue the wounded, and to bury the dead where they lay. With the shadows lying black in the folds and depressions, they were obliged to use lanterns and flash-lights. Poilu saw these, glimmering like fireflies on a marsh. Scrambling up to the rim of the crater, he stood until he was seen, and led a burial squad down to his fallen master.

The soldier who searched the pockets found Monsieur Henri's discharge. He wrote the date and place of death on the margin, made a rough diagram of the location of the grave, and slipped the paper, together with a peasant's rosary of carved cherry stones, into the leather pocket on Poilu's collar. All personal belongings must be sent to the War Office in Paris, to be returned to the family.

"Letters here, *mes camarades*, and photographs. And behold! The dog is a

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hero. His mistress will want his collar of honor.”

He tried to unbuckle it, but with a savage growl Poilu flung him off and showed his teeth. His collar was his own—a badge of distinction of which he was proud, and the contents of the pocket were a sacred trust to be delivered to madame or *grandpère*. With such a powerful and determined animal nothing was to be done at the time but to leave him in possession. He would come for food before he famished, and his moroseness would wear away with his grief. A good home must be found for this four-footed *brave* with a market-woman in one of the villages, for with his master dead he would be of no further use in the army.

When the grave was filled in, a small wooden cross was set up and stenciled with the name and the original military unit of the old soldier who lay buried there. What food these comrades had in their pockets was given to the mourning dog. After they were gone Poilu ate it, and lay down again, with his muzzle resting on the rough mound. Not until the moon had

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sunk behind the melancholy ruins of the monastery on the Mont des Chats did he rise to his feet and climb out of the shell-hole.

His padded feet made no sound when he threaded his way around dugouts, leaped across the hastily dug and abandoned trenches of the enemy, and crawled under wrecked tangles of barbed wire, to the hilltop. The moon was behind the hills, and the wide valley lay in shadow, dim and ghostly, shrouded as it was in battle smoke and noisome vapors. Since the days when he had tracked the German spy with old Gabriel he had known the smell of the hated *boche*. Across the enemy encampment, which stretched for ten miles to the bank of the Lys, there was no thoroughfare, even for a dog. But without an instant's hesitation Poilu dropped down the slope.

## CHAPTER VII

### MONSIEUR LA REVANCHE

HEARING the distant artillery-fire open with unusual violence on the morning that Monsieur Henri fell in the defense of Mont Locre, old Gabriel was out of doors before any one else in the village was astir. As the wounded had come streaming back from the battle-front through Lille and Roubaix, the region was so drained of troops to fill the depleted enemy ranks that no guards were left behind to patrol the canal and suburban stretches of the Lille road. For two weeks the fiery Alsatian patriot had been able to use the wrecked belfry for an observation post by day, and to slip out of the house at all *verboden* hours of the night.

With a heart of wrath and grief he had marked the rapid advance of the German armies across the low valley of the Lys

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and up the hills, by the cottony puffs which broke along a receding horizon, by the ever-lessening sounds of explosions, the flames of burning towns, and the crowning infamy of the destruction of the monastery. Now, through the smoke-darkened mist, he could see nothing besides the ruddy disk of the full moon that was setting in the west. But the reports of big guns came more clearly, and from overhead, above the low cloud which enveloped the flat country, came the loud humming of invisible airplanes.

He was all excitement, for a duel in the air was a dramatic event. He had witnessed one, and could imagine what could not be seen. First one, and then another in pursuit and overtaking it, they maneuvered for position, circling and darting after each other at varying elevations. At too close quarters to permit the best use of machine-guns, hostilities began with the crackle of revolver-shots, and ended in tragic suddenness with the explosion of a bomb.

With a swift, birdlike turn, a soaring flight, and a rapid beat of its motor, one



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of the machines made off as the other burst into a luminous cloud. A nucleus of fire, swirled about with burning vapors, it shot earthward and smashed into the canal dike, a twisted heap of blazing wreckage. The pilot leaped before it struck, turned over in midair, and crumpled under a hedge. With the dead German's revolver hidden under his smock, old Gabriel vanished into the house. It was a full half-hour before a relief squad arrived on the scene from Roubaix, for there were no guards nearer than the bridge.

To this ardent patriot, who burned to strike another blow for France before he died, and to avenge his own bereft and ruined youth, the weapon was a gift from Heaven. He meant to use it at the first opportunity, but he dared not hide it in the house nor carry it on his person. People and dwellings were frequently searched for secret stores of money, food, clothing, and articles of metal. The last sheet was taken from the bed now, and the iron cooking-pot from the scanty fire; and the possession of the most innocent letter from beyond the German lines, or of

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a useless old musket, was punishable by death.

About the consequences to himself the veteran soldier cared nothing, but he had no intention of involving his courageous and devoted daughter-in-law in any dangerous enterprise. So he waited until madame had gone to market, with the scant barrow-load of vegetables which she was permitted to sell at stated intervals and fixed prices, before venturing out onto the deck of a barge, which had lain tied to the decaying landing since the beginning of the war.

Once employed in carrying such clean freight as bales of wool and flax from Antwerp to the carpet factories of Roubaix, it was a trimly built craft, with white paint under its thick coating of grime. The German authorities had sealed the door of the commodious deck-house and then, apparently, had forgotten it, for its neat furnishings had never been disturbed. There were dusty bed-couches along the walls, a table, chairs, a litter of yellow feathers on the floor of a gilded cage, dead plants in the rows of pots on the long sills

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of the flanking Dutch windows, a tile stove, and a hanging-lamp fringed with crystal prisms. This floating home and place of business, once so full of bustle and merry family life, with an alert and gritty little schipperke challenging every stranger who came over the gang-plank, was now but a moldering grave of dead hopes, haunted by piteous ghosts. Should it sink at its moorings, it would lie unsalvaged until the end of the war and the clearing of the canal for normal traffic.

The frail old man had the astonishing nervous strength of his type to pull the rusted iron pin from the staple of the hatch and to raise the heavy covering. The craft was of the simplest construction—the hull merely a roomy, flat-bottomed shell a dozen feet deep, decked over, and with a removable ladder set up in the hatchway. Old Gabriel scrambled down the steps with the agility of a boy, but he moved about the black and empty hold cautiously, for the floor was covered with several inches of slimy water, and with the stamp of his wooden sabot he could have broken a hole anywhere through the rotten

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planks. He made a dismaying discovery about the beautiful, polished revolver, but decided that it would serve with a *boche*, since every bully was a coward. Finding a dry place of concealment for it, and for a shapeless bundle which he had brought up from the cellar of the house, he climbed to the deck again and closed the hatch, and when madame returned from the market he was busily engaged in planting potatoes.

Madame was still pale from the horror of having seen a train-load of repatriates leave Roubaix, and she told *grandpère* about it as they ate the thin vegetable soup, made without milk or fat, and the good bread which was supplied at cost by the branch of the Belgian Relief Commission in Lille.

For more than a year, now, of those made destitute in the densely populated cities of the Nord by the closing of factories, mines, and empty shops, the strong were deported to forced labor in Germany, while those who became public charges—the old, the invalid, the defective, and orphaned children—were “repatriated.”

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Herded in filthy cattle-cars, they were taken back across Belgium, in round-about ways through Switzerland, and dumped into France, to be added to the staggering burden of *la patrie*, and to undermine the morale of the French people.

Permitted to take food for only a few days, the torturing journeys were deliberately lengthened into weeks, by hourly side-tracking for military trains and detentions in open concentration camps. Many died on the way, or arrived at their destination in a dying condition. Heart-broken friends left behind never heard of these unfortunates again.

"I saw *les misérables*, *grandpère*, thrust into those foul cages by brutal guards, who kicked them about and pricked them with bayonets. But the courage of them! Not one cried out or begged for mercy of the fiends. Their own families were not permitted in the railway-yard to bid them *adieu*; but the spectators smiled and waved and wished them a *bon voyage*, as though they were off on a pleasure journey. The infamous *boches* may murder us all, but they cannot conquer our souls. Such in-

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humanity is unbelievable of any creature that walks on two legs."

"The Hun is not human, Julie. He is a gorilla with a gun." The imaginative Alsatian chuckled over his inspired epithet. One must find the blond beast amusing or go demented.

Before she returned to her work in the fields madame knelt at the feet of a cheap, painted image of the Virgin, told her beads, and gave thanks that the farming villages were more than self-sustaining, and had been spared that particular form of frightfulness. Then she went to her task of tying up lettuce-heads for the blanching process. There was not a glazed window in the village, but the market-women were supplied with glass for the forcing-beds in which they grew early salad vegetables for official tables. Madame did not resent that where others were suffering such infinitely greater wrongs; and it was a blessing—healing for the tortured mind and breaking heart—to have the accustomed work among growing things.

Two days later old Gabriel was transported with joy on awaking to discover

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that the great Flanders drive had failed. The battle had been silenced and flattened out, under a pall of smoke in the valley of the Lys. The certainty that the liberties of France had been defended against that smashing blow made him work with such feverish energy that madame feared he would exhaust himself. She called to him that he must rest, and stopped herself to see that he went to his favorite rustic bench under the blossoming fruit trees.

Physically he grew more feeble every year. During the winter he had been threatened with the great white plague which was decimating the chilled and underfed population of the Nord. To keep him warm she had burned the dog- and poultry-houses, the rabbit-hutches and cart-shed, and then the doors and furniture of the upper chambers. And besides the milk, eggs, and potatoes of her own that she dared steal, she had fed him all of the few ounces of bacon, sugar, and rice which she was allowed to buy in any one month. With the coming of spring the bronchial cough had disappeared, but there was now

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a malady of the heart, and any excitement or fatigue brought on an alarming attack. But, if tenderly cherished, his vivid spark of life—so wonderful in one so old—could be kept from flickering out until the war was over, and he could have the happiness of seeing the surviving members of the family reunited.

With the movements of every one restricted to their homes and places of business, visitors were unknown in the dreary, half-ruined village whose population had dwindled to forty market-women, old people, and children. So madame looked up when a car stopped at the crossing, to see a German officer turning down from the Lille road.

“*Ma foi! grandpère*, but we are to have a distinguished guest.”

The circumstance was so alarming that the timid scurried into their houses like frightened rabbits. The market-women, thinking that everything unbearable had already been inflicted upon them, bent to their profitless toil again. Madame Daulac indulged in light, ironic comments on the fact that *boche* officers were now obliged to



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use public conveyances, and to go on their errands unattended by orderlies.

It was old Gabriel's shrewd guess that Germany was running as short of materials and man power as of food. Military servants, rubber tires, and gorgeous uniforms were luxuries reserved for *von excellenzes*. He had stiffened belligerently, and then relaxed and sat as though fallen into the doze of senility, a clever bit of acting that had served before to let him pass unnoticed. The wisest course for one with such a gifted tongue was to avoid being betrayed into talk.

Not until the officer stood before her did madame rise to her feet and give him the attention of polite reserve which marked her manner toward any stranger. It delighted her to see that his field-gray uniform was shabby—of poor materials, ill-fitting, stained, and faded; but after a fashion that is admired in Germany he was a handsome young man, arrogant, stuffed, and sensual. A cold, vindictive brute, this morning's task was very much to his taste.

Madame had seen the filing-cards which

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he carried, on other visits of inquisition, requisition, or search. They contained the census statistics of the village, with many an intimate item gathered by the industrious spy who had sat in their chimney-corners for years. When one died of privations, or was stood up against a wall and shot, or deported into slavery, or repatriated, a card was destroyed, and that was the end of one. She was chilled to the marrow of her bones when he separated a half-dozen cards from the thin package.

"Gabriel Daulac," he read from the first one. "Age seventy-nine; a pestilent Alsatian, known to his neighbors as Monsieur la Revanche." He fixed madame with a stare from his shallow blue eyes, and his hard mouth curled into a cruel smile. "He is a renegade from German Alsace, and could be shot for a traitor, but he will serve us better as a repatriate. A squad of soldiers will be sent to the village when the next train-load leaves Roubaix."

"Pardon, monsieur"—the people of the region had persisted so in affecting stupidity concerning German military titles that efforts to enforce their use had been aban-

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done—“but my husband’s father is not a public charge. He has this good farm for his maintenance. I myself am his tenant.”

“None of you own anything in this conquered land! He takes your time from labor which belongs to Germany, and he eats as much as a soldier. We intend to keep no one here who is not useful to us,” he shouted, and shook his fist in her face.

“Then there is nothing to be discussed, monsieur.” She was not to be goaded into any show of feeling for his pleasure. With unruffled urbanity, and the comment of a shrug on his violence, she excused herself on the plea of having much work to do for Germany, and left him standing when she stooped to her task again.

Her proud disdain aroused in him that devil of malice which would torture or destroy what it could not conquer. “He will have the felicity of being buried in *la belle* France—if he arrive. Your *verdamnte* government is defeated, but refuses to make peace. Its own obstinacy is responsible for reducing its citizens to

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these straits. You pig-dogs will clamor for peace before we are done with you."

She made no reply, and he was fairly foaming with rage when he turned away with a guttural oath. In twenty minutes he had made up his list of repatriates for the village, and left the wild misery of sudden insanity in one wretched household, where two orphaned and adored grandchildren were to be torn from the arms of a strong market-woman who had lost every other member of her family. The frightened weeping of *les enfants*, and hysterical laughter, pursued him from the house.

Having finished that agreeable business, he strode to the dike to inspect the wrecked airplane. Then, the barge attracting his attention, he went aboard from the landing and broke the seal on the door of the deck-house. He came out at once with a certain brisk interest, as though life had suddenly brightened for him, and gave madame definite orders about cleaning the place with lye and scouring-sand. He would fetch out oil for the lamp, and some heavy stuff for draping the windows, and she was to take charge of a case of wine.

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“You are to do the work at night and say nothing about it. You understand, *femelle?*” He hurled the insulting epithet at her, and with a threatening scowl strode away, his arrogant boots ringing on the cobbled path. When he was gone madame sank to a milking-stool, a figure of desolation. For the beloved ancient, who had transmitted his mental and social gifts to her lost children, this was a sentence of death. At the end of her resources, her courage oozed from her, drop by drop, like blood from a wounded heart.

“I heard the brute, Julie.” Old Gabriel was beside her, his black eyes snapping with rage, but singularly elated, for his quick mind had conceived a daring plan. “You are not to be distressed, *ma chère*. Me, I do not go. I do not perish like an imbecile sheep. They shall not use me to add to the burden and break the spirit of France. At last I will have the revenge! I will die fighting for *la patrie!*” It was a tragic thing to see him double his little, shaking, futile fist so valiantly. He seemed not to realize the hopelessness of resistance, and presently he fell into such

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a mood of levity as made madame fear that all these horrors had unbalanced his mind.

"So—you are to make of the old barge a *pavillon de joie*? It is perhaps an affair clandestine, arranged for a night off duty, and not reported to superiors. Monsieur Gorilla would give a *soirée*. How does a jungle beast amuse himself at an evening party? He has wine. He drapes the casements. He speaks not of music, although he is fond of a noisy orchestra. You are to say nothing about it, or off comes your head. Ah-ha! He would not advertise his pleasure!"

He checked off the items in the old manner of a suave, dramatic landlord, bowed before an imaginary patron, and kissed his hand. "Monsieur, it is arranged. Me, I will assist in person, and furnish the surprise." He skipped away in a dancing step, laughing like any mischievous school-boy who plans a practical joke. Not in nearly four years had madame seen him so happy.

Terror and despair oozed through the very walls of the little shuttered stone farm-houses, in which people awaited a

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dreadful summons, on the night that Poilu trotted homeward along the tow-path of the canal.

The dog had been four days on the short journey of twenty miles, for he could travel only in the few dark hours which now intervened between the long northern twilight and moonrise. He had had to make wide detours around encampments, and avoid the military roads and the sentried pontoon bridges which spanned every stream. He had been obliged to leap over occupied trenches; lie for hours in foul ditches; flee from the shelter of gas-drenched shell-holes which smelled of moldy forage, mustard, and garlic; and scramble under tangles of rusty barbed wire strung with jingling bells. He had killed a pair of vicious police-dogs that were set upon him, and then escaped from the hot pursuit of gun-shots by diving into the canal and lying submerged among wreckage, with nothing but his lacerated muzzle above water.

Even now, as he neared home, nosing along the familiar path, he was not reassured. The moon would not rise until

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an hour before midnight, and the desolated landscape was black and forbidding. There were no cheerful lights or traffic on the stagnant canal or the Lille road. He listened for a challenging bark from the stable-yards, but the half-starved dogs had been taxed out of existence two years before. And here, too, was the very smell of invasion. The fresh grass about the ancient door-stone upon which he lay down was polluted with the odor of the *boche*.

He dared not bark in that hostile air, but, a heavy animal, he dropped with a thud, and in a moment a window-shutter beside the door was opened like a cautious eyelid. When Poilu leaped and, with his paws on the sill, licked *grandpère's* hands, the startled old man leaned out with a shrill cry, "*Mon brave*, is it you?" And when the dog wriggled with delight and hurled his weight against the stout door, after his old manner of asking admission, he called back, in an excited whisper, "Julie, of all who have departed, it is Poilu who returns!"

The impatient dog heard the footsteps



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of his mistress hurrying across the flagged kitchen. She opened the door the narrowest possible aperture, but he flung it wide in bounding through. And there he was in his own corner of the hearth, pre-empted in puppyhood. The handful of fire in the grate gave just enough light to see their faces, when they bent over him with exclamations and caresses. He lolled his tongue and wagged his tail and rubbed his big head against them, and then lay down, tired and hungry, but in blissful content. This weary and battered soldier was home from the war, and greedy for every loving attention that could be showered upon him.

*Grandpère* fetched a basin of water and washed his torn and bloody muzzle, and madame broke what bread she had into the thin, vegetable soup. The dog was so famished that he bolted the food, licked the dish, and with confident brown eyes asked for more. In the old days of peace and plenty Poilu's huge appetite had been a thing for laughter and droll comment, but now madame lifted her hands in very real distress.

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"*Mon Dieu, grandpère!* How are we to feed this faithful friend?" It came over her all at once that it was a tragic thing to be a dog in that imprisoned and looted land, where a greedy tyrant now refused food to the old, the sick, and the fatherless child. But the immediate necessity was to hide him.

This French war-dog had come through the German lines with a collar that was the canine *Croix de Guerre*, and with papers in his messenger-pocket! As a motor-car was heard turning into the village street, madame lighted an inch of candle and hurried Poilu down into the cellar. "Monsieur Gorilla" was arriving with his evening party. Old Gabriel showed no distaste, but the liveliest interest, in remaining above to deliver the case of wine which stood within, beside the door.

As madame bent over Poilu to unbuckle the collar she suddenly comprehended the dog's return to his home. He would never have deserted a living master. Her husband was dead. "Is it true, thou faithful and brave?" She took his muzzle between her hands and found confirmation in his

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mournful eyes. But for her consolation he had perhaps brought a message from the departed, and news of the living, for there were postmarked letters in the package which she slipped out of the pocket and back again. They and the collar must be hidden at once.

Cleverly concealed springs released the heavy planks in the end of a built-in vegetable-bin which, in this season, was empty. Behind it she had opened a hole in the cellar wall in which to conceal *grandpère's* drum and his old military uniform, in which he was determined to be buried. The quaint little charcoal-stove for summer cooking and a bag of charcoal were there; a box of linen caps made from the last sheet before it could be requisitioned; and the Tricolor, rescued from the church belfry, was neatly folded and laid away in a covered iron cooking-pot. She dropped the collar of the four-footed hero into the pot with the flag, and, taking out a small jar of precious ointment, made from goose grease and healing herbs before the war, smeared it on Poilu's wounds.

She had heard the door open above, the

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surly order, the dragging out of the case of wine, a scream from the street, and a brutal laugh, to which she closed her ears in helpless horror. The hot and poisonous vapors of the inferno seemed to envelop her. Were these crimes never to end, never to be punished? Then the door was shut and there fell again the silence of a walled prison, in which one almost feared to speak.

"*Grandpère*," she called in a hushed voice from the foot of the cellar stairs. There was no answer. In wild alarm she began to thrust everything back into the hole, when her hand probed an empty space. The uniform was gone! Cold fear gripped her heart, and her strong hands shook as she pushed the planks back in place. Bidding the dog lie down in the bin, she ran up the steps, across the echoing kitchen, and out of doors.

The moon had risen, with half its pallid disk in eclipse, and in that ghostly light she saw the battered limousine with its broken canopy, and its wheels tired with tarred ropes. The engine was dead, and the head and tail lamps had been extin-

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guished. No light came through the heavily draped windows of the deck-house, but the warped door was outlined by a thin line of illumination from within.

The scoured deck showed a black square where the hatch was open, and up from the hold she saw the Alsatian veteran climb and stand in the moonlight, panoplied in the gallant trappings of the disastrous war of his youth, but carrying a modern revolver which he handled with reassuring expertness. And in him madame saw the spirit of the allied nations that were battling for the liberty of the world. Men never could be conquered who were so eager to die in the righting of monstrous wrongs, and in the taking of just vengeance in the name of *le bon Dieu*. Whether this lone crusader succeeded or failed in his desperate enterprise, he was going to swift and certain death. But not for anything in this world or the next would she have stopped him when he flung open the door of the deck-house, slipped within, and closed it behind him.

“Both hands, *haut!*” Old Gabriel covered the four young German officers with

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the revolver. They stumbled up from the couches on which they had been lying, half drunk and convulsed with bestial laughter at the horror-stricken demoiselles who were huddled together in a corner, like any little trapped animals. Suddenly sobered by that apparition, as of an avenging ghost from the field of Sedan, they lined up with their faces to the farther wall and with their hands stretched above their heads.

"Messieurs, you are advised not to move or speak while the demoiselles collect your side-arms. Do not be afraid, *mes enfants*. As you make the exit you will please lay the swords and pistols behind the raised hatch for me. Thus I am provided with a fort and an arsenal." His black eyes sparkled, and his white mustache took on the jaunty upward turn.

It was not necessary to ask these young girls how they came to be in this tragic plight. They could have been seized in the dusk of evening, when returning in company from some legitimate errand, or "arrested" in their homes on the flimsiest charge. The region had many such, who,

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children when the war began, were now budding into a young womanhood that attracted the lecherous eye of the blond beast. They all lived on the same street in one of the once elegant villa suburbs of Lille. He addressed the most composed of the four.

“You have the skill to operate the car, mademoiselle?”

“Yes, monsieur. The limousine of *mon père* was requisitioned.”

“And the countersign?”

“It is ‘*Hoch Bismarck*,’ monsieur.”

“*C’est bien!* Appropriate the outer coats and helmets of your hosts. You will find the livery of *le diable* an assistance. The rude manner and bullying tone are to be employed in speaking to a German guard, and a *verdammte* or so. The slave is accustomed to being cursed. The residence streets are not patrolled, so abandon the car in a public square or the service alley of an idle factory, and go home. Burn or bury your borrowed trappings.”

“*Merci*, monsieur! All our lives we will remember you in our prayers.”

“Do not thank me, *mes enfants*. I had

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a sister. There was no one to rescue her from a Prussian beast. Pray for Suzette."

They would—they would indeed. After the war was over they would burn candles before the Virgin in the parish church for her. They had tears, now, for the long-dead, never-forgotten Suzette. "But you, monsieur?" They shuddered and blanched at the thought of the hideous, torturing death which might be meted out to him. This wretched, silent, tight-shut little row of humble homes which lay in black shadow, with the pallid, shrunken moon behind it still low in the sky, might be given over to the bomb and firing-squad

"Do not be alarmed, *mes enfants*. No one will be punished for this night's good work." He spoke with a smiling confidence which mystified but reassured them, and wished them the usual "*Au revoir! Bonne chance!*"

Under cover of the sounds of their running feet on the deck and the laying down of the weapons, he backed out of the deck-house, and from behind the barricade of the raised hatch covered the exit with the leveled revolver. Waiting until the chug-



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ging of the motor had died away on the Lille road, he ordered his captives to turn, one at a time, hands held high, march out, and descend the ladder into the hold. When "Monsieur Gorilla" appeared, foaming with rage and humiliation, he stopped him on the brink.

"You have the list of repatriates, monsieur. Produce it!"

The German officer glared at the armed fanatic who would stop at nothing, with the venom of a baffled snake, but, permitted to lower one hand, he found the paper in an inner pocket and dropped it to the deck.

"Take the little souvenir of your hellish work with you, monsieur. It will interest your master." The turn was so amazing, and old Gabriel chuckled so to see the arrogant Prussian stoop and pick the paper up again, that he reported to his fellow-prisoners below that the theatrical monkey of a French peasant was insane. They were confirmed in that opinion when their captor lay on the edge of the hatchway, wrenched the ladder free, and flung it down among them. He was a dangerous

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maniac. They began to shout for help, and to curse in very real alarm.

"If profanity relieves your feelings, messieurs, pray indulge. There are none to hear you but women and children—no guards nearer than the bridge at Roubaix."

Getting out of range of the wicked-looking little weapon which gleamed in the faint moonlight, they resigned themselves sullenly to imprisonment until morning, but the Alsatian veteran furnished them better employment. Leaning over the opening, he threw down their swords and pistols, hurling them with a great clattering and a splashing of foul water to bow and stern of the black hold. Slipping on the slimy bottom, the officers tramped about, searching for the arms whose loss would subject them to trial by court martial. There was a startled oath when a heavy boot went through a rotten plank. Water began to pour in with sucking, gurgling sounds. The prisoners were trying to raise the ladder, and beating one another down into the rising flood, in their frantic efforts to escape the death of rats trapped in a wreck, when old Gabriel low-

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ered the hatch to the narrow aperture through which he flung his own weapon.

"The revolver of the dead aviator was not loaded, messieurs. It was emptied of cartridges in that duel in the air. *Adieu!* You are repatriated to your fatherland, which is *l'enfer*. My compliments to your Kaiser, *Monsieur le Diable*."

He collapsed upon the dropped hatch. By a violent effort he succeeded in thrusting the iron bar through the staple. The maddened cries below were muffled by the solid timber walls, but the barge rocked with the struggles. The craft had begun to settle when madame reached the fallen patriot. She was staggering down the dike with her burden when the pull on the decaying rope cable parted the last strand, and the flat-bottomed boat slid down the muddy slope into deep water.

## CHAPTER VIII

### "THEY ALSO SERVE"

MADAME thought old Gabriel was dead when she carried him into the house, but he still breathed, and there was a faint fluttering of the pulse when she laid him against the heap of straw pillows in the half-sitting position in which, because of his malady, he had long been obliged to sleep. Exalted as she was with pride in his valor, she was heart-broken that she could do so little for him. There were no magic drops now to prolong his life, for the pharmacies were empty, desolate, nothing left on their dusty shelves, and the German authorities refused to furnish remedies from their medical supplies.

Relighting the fragment of candle to see to move about, she heated water in a battered tin saucepan and warmed his hands

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and feet; and when he recovered consciousness she bent over him.

"Dear *grandpère*, the Mother of God knows that I can do nothing more," she said, as she put his crucifix into his hands. There was not even a curé to bring to him the last comforts of religion.

"It is of no consequence, *ma chère*." The Alsatian patriot had had "the revenge" and was paying to *la patrie* the last full measure of sacrifice and devotion. Besides, he had the serene conviction that *le bon Dieu* Himself had shriven the souls of the martyred people of Belgium and France. His earthly duty done, and with no concern for the hereafter, he was distressed only about the difficulty of dying in peace and of being buried in his uniform under the eyes of the malignant enemy.

That problem was solved at once by the resourceful madame, who slipped on his one faded and incredibly patched, but all-enveloping, denim smock, over the blue coat and baggy red breeches of the Second Empire. With a sigh of satisfaction old Gabriel sank back to his pillows, and presently his thoughts turned with longing to

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the scattered members of the family. He had hoped to live to see those who survived reunited around this ancestral hearth.

“The papers, Julie—Poilu brought messages.”

Madame was glad to see a flash of his old impatience when she confessed that she had burned the last inch of candle and had no light for reading. But a man who could hold to one grim purpose for nearly a half-century, and then carry it out with such brilliant success, was not to be robbed of the desire of his heart in the last hour.

“I will live until morning, *ma fille*,” he announced, in a voice strengthened by his resolution, “and I will have the air to breathe.”

Even God’s good air had been rationed to these prisoners of hate. In a revolt against that long tyranny, madame defied the proscription, and set the doors wide for the first time at night in nearly four years, letting the spring wind drift through the house and sweep it clean of the prison smell. At her call Poilu came bounding up from the cellar. The dog had not understood his banishment. Eager to prove

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his devotion to his mistress, he lay down across the street doorway at her bidding, on guard. Through the rear madame looked out upon the shadowy fields and the deserted Lille road. Old Gabriel sagged down in the bed like a tired child and fell asleep.

For hours madame sat on the linen-chest and listened to his rapid, shallow breathing. Clouds obscured the setting moon, and a brief period of heavy rain washed away the marks of rope-tired wheels in the village street. In the early morning birds twittered in the hedges, and the air was scented by the blossoming fruit trees. With the brightening of dawn above the smokeless and half-wrecked chimneys of Roubaix, madame brought Poilu's collar up from the cellar, and when *grandpère* awoke she knelt and spread the papers on the ragged coverlet. There were so many for his delight! One after another she opened them, and conjured the spirits of the lost and of the absent, until all that he loved on earth were gathered around his bed.

In her husband's honorable discharge

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she found things not for grief to this fiery patriot who was so nearly done with earth, but a record to fill his heart with joy and pride. There was the story of his disablement, his refusal of exemption, his long service in the transport work with Poilu. Then, written in pencil on the margin, with the rough drawing which located his grave, it was told how he had fallen in the defense of Mont Locre. “*Grandpère*, there will be a *Croix de Guerre* with palm for Henri.”

“Thanks to *le bon Dieu*! I had a brave son to give to France!” It was wine to the soul of the ardent southerner, who had not understood his slow Fleming of a son, nor credited him with much depth of patriotic feeling. His vivid little parchment-colored face wrinkled into a smile of perfect happiness.

“The noble *chien* can lead me to the place. When the war is over we will go to Mont Locre together, with a cart, and fetch Henri home to lie with us all in the churchyard. And on a small headstone I will have cut the inscription: ‘*Mort pour la patrie*,’ to let the world know that he died for France.”



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They paid the tribute of proud tears to their brave soldier; and Poilu was called to the bedside, for the family circle was not complete without this courageous and faithful dog who had come through the German lines from that new-made grave, with news of the dead and the living.

Madame exclaimed when she opened the thick package of letters from Victor to Jeanne Marie: “*Ma foi! grandpère*, but *le petit* is in London!”

“*Mais non!*” As though he had been galvanized, old Gabriel sat up and stared at her in bewilderment. With no news of the outer world in nearly four years besides the reports manufactured in Berlin, they had believed that London had been destroyed by raiding Zeppelins and airplanes. To them the capital of the world had gone up in flames and its ashes strewn on the winds. But here was the London post-mark of only a month before! Then all the rest were but lies to break their spirits! Paris had not been captured, nor all the cathedrals of France crumbled into dust, nor had the ships been driven from the seas by the cowardly assassins of submarines.

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Madame eased old Gabriel back to his pillows, revived as by no remedies in the pharmacopœia.

The boy had arrived in safety at the monastery on the Mont des Chats, and Jeanne Marie had sent him on with a family of French refugees. Every month for nearly three years he had written to her with a brave cheerfulness, but with longing for his home and family.

DEAR SISTER,—I am well and happy. . . . With one of *maman's* five-franc pieces changed into four shillings of English money I bought a box of little candles. Every evening I go to the parish church and set a lighted taper on the altar. I pray to the Virgin, as I promised *cher papa*, that the good French and British soldiers may soon go back to Lille and Roubaix. . . . My heart swells with grief when I think that *maman* and *grandpère* are prisoners of *les boches*.

\* \* \* \* \*

There are many air raids, and children were killed in a school. But the English people are not frightened. They are enraged, and the army grows and grows. . . . The English are like the Flemings. They do not say much, but they fight like their little bulldog. That terrible *chien* never lets go. He dies with his teeth locked in the enemy.

\* \* \* \* \*

## "POILU"—A DOG OF ROUBAIX

It would make *maman* and *grandpère* happy to know that I now have work as an apprentice in a chemist's shop. I pay for my food and lodging, and have the English clothes. Every one is kind, but to wear the smock it is to be conspicuous. . . . There is plenty to eat. The ships come and go in the great harbor of London. A few ships are sunk, but the Kaiser's barbarian country gets nothing.

\* \* \* \* \*

DEAR SISTER,—I do not waste my time. I go to school at night to learn the English and chemistry. I have money in a bank to take home. *Maman* will need it to buy a new dog and cart. And I am to serve *la patrie*, too. I made of myself a *peste*—what the English call a nuisance—until they promised me the war work. Soon I am to be employed in a munitions factory.

\* \* \* \* \*

To-day I burned with pride and glory. I wore three little flags for a *boutonnière*. They were for France and England and the United States. London was *en fête*. *Les soldats américains* marched through the streets, on their way to the battle-fields of France. They were so many they were not to be counted. And so tall, so strong, so gay. They had the *élan* to jump down the throats of the *boches*. I shouted so that now I have no voice. It is to be transported with the happiness.

The great American Republic was in the war, fighting for France! Of this they had

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heard nothing. It was the rising of the sun of hope after an endless night. Madame wiped away old Gabriel's tears of joy, and brought his spectacles so that he could see a photograph of his darling grandson, who, in his intelligence and ardor, was so like himself.

The sixteen-year-old boy looked strong and well-grown, and he had a quite delightful air of the traveled; but he was small, and dark, and bright, and entirely French, in spite of his English coat and hat. The happy veteran pressed the picture to his lips and held it in his hands, while Madame read the letter which Jeanne Marie had written to her father while he lay asleep in the monastery garden. So eager was she for the word that a flock of unmounted snapshot photographs fluttered out unnoticed and settled on the bed.

*MON PERE*.—It has been a great happiness to see you and Poilu again. A nurse of the *Croix Rouge* has no time to be unhappy. And where we see so many brave men die it would be a dishonor to be afraid of the enemy's bombing airplanes. They cannot frighten us away from our posts of duty. But if the monastery should be bombarded we will remove the *blésés* to Hazebrouck or St.-Omer.

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My Joseph fell at Soissons, but as the *boches* pull up and burn the little white wooden crosses with the tricolor rosettes, with which the graves of our fallen soldiers are marked, I can never find his body to fetch it home. But I can set up a memorial stone in little our green churchyard and put upon it, "*Mort pour la patrie.*"

"Two heroes in the family!" As old Gabriel lay there, his eyes dilated and burning, he was himself a symbol of the honor and the glory and the spiritual magnificence of the undying soul of France. Madame was inspired.

"Three heroes, *grandpère*. When the war is over, and the story of this night can be told, and proved by the raising of the barge, you, too, shall have the inscription. When people read how Gabriel Daulac, aged seventy-nine, died for France, they will wonder most of all that one so old could have done so brave a thing."

He wanted nothing more of earth, but there was something more—the assurance that France herself would revive with the coming of peace. As fresh shoots were closing the breaches in the broken hedges, and grass springing in battle-scarred fields,

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so little children were being born to fill the ranks of the fallen brave.

But, *mon père*, we shall have something more of my Joseph than a memory—something to live for, to work for, to make the old stone farm-house gay for us all. Behold these charming views of the little Josephine! There is another *petit bijou* for you to pet and spoil in your age. She is three years old now, and is named for her lamented father. But, to be sure, such an *enfant* is to be called Fifi.

So that was the “gift from Joseph,” that had made Jeanne Marie so happy in the earliest days of her loss! Madame pounced upon those “charming views.” There was Fifi in her mother’s arms, and Jeanne Marie as beautiful as a Madonna. . . . Fifi sitting on the floor and trying to put her little big toe into her mouth. . . . Fifi in a high-chair by a bare kitchen table, eating bread and milk. . . . Fifi venturing on her first steps in a fearful joy. . . . Fifi scattering grain to poultry and feeding cabbage leaves to rabbits. . . . Fifi nursing a doll. . . . Fifi, the very image of the baby Jeanne Marie—a vivid sprite of child, bubbling over with laughter. Here was one to grow up with no memory of these

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bad old days when wicked German kings made war in Flanders. Fifi would make bright the foggiest of landscapes, the grayest of grief-stricken hearts, the blackest of ruined fortunes.

"*Grandpère*," madame said, "the villages of France will rise again. Everywhere there will be busy little feet to patter over the old stone floors." She turned back eagerly to the letter.

*Cher papa*, the little Fifi is on a farm in Normandy. It is near the old market-town of Les Andelys above Rouen on the Seine. Madame Céleste Duval is her good foster-mother, and I have a precious week with the *enfant* twice a year. Her name—Josephine Marie Menard—is entered in the parish register of baptisms, and the curé and Madame Duval have the address of *maman*. Then if anything should happen to me, *maman* would be told, and she could go and fetch Fifi home.

"*Ma foi!* I would go to Rome on my knees for Fifi!" Tears of pure joy rolled down madame's cheeks.

The morning was now so far advanced that a *boche* inspector was liable to appear at any moment to see that every one was at work for Germany. So madame put the

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precious papers back into the messenger-pocket, and hurried the dog collar into its place of concealment in the cellar. She banished Poilu again, for she intended to sit beside *grandpère*, refusing to work as long as he lived, and one difficulty at a time was enough to cope with. When she returned, old Gabriel regarded her with affectionate concern.

“You will be alone now, *ma chère*. If you declined to toil for the *boche* you might be repatriated. Then you could go to Victor.”

She shook her head with smiling composure. “No, *grandpère*, a strong peasant woman who rebelled would be deported to a camp of forced labor in Germany. And, *ma foi!* now! If I abandoned it the *boches* would destroy the house and dig up the farm and ship it to Berlin. Me, I stay here and guard the home. That is the task of the women of France, to keep their feet on the soil, to wait and endure, so there will be homes to which the scattered members of families may return. In the end it is always the peasant women of France who are the Territorial Reserves—the



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home guard. We are not to be driven from our posts of duty by frightfulness.

"And attend, *grandpère*. You are not to be distressed. I shall have Poilu for company. The Relief Commission in Lille is providing a coarse bread free of cost, to keep what remain of our working-dogs alive. I will accept charity for that noble *chien*. So that will cost the *boches* nothing, and I can do twice the work."

She talked with animation of the time when all these horrors would be ended. Then the children would come home with money, for Jeanne Marie was paid for her services like any other soldier. The buried household treasures could then be dug up and the place set in order. Above a new clock on the mantel *grandpère's* old musket should hang with Henri's *Croix de Guerre*, and Joseph's, and the collar of Poilu. Victor would have employment in the chemical works in Lille, until he was twenty and obliged to go away for his military training. And with so much suffering in Roubaix to be relieved, Jeanne Marie would continue at her new profession of nursing. Never again would she

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desire a lingerie-shop, or be content to work in chiffons to cater to the vanity of the *bourgeoise*.

“And, *grandpère*, with *ma fille* away much of the time attending her patients, I shall have Fifi on the farm. When I go to market with a new red cart, *la petite* sits up in it like a fairy queen. Ah, but you should be there to observe the pride of Poilu!”

Madame began to count the years of that happy and prosperous future. She was but forty-three, although these years of horror had turned the hair under her neat linen cap entirely white. In fifteen years, with close economy, she and Jeanne Marie could have a *dot* of three thousand francs in the bank for Fifi. While she was still talking the Alsatian patriot fell asleep and lay in a smiling peace. Madame was not sure of the moment when he ceased to breathe.

To relieve *grandpère's* mind of concern for herself in that last, happy hour, madame had spoken of her ability to keep Poilu with greater confidence than she felt. As these intelligent animals were used for

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many purposes of war in both Belgium and French Flanders, and might well be employed to carry messages into the region occupied by the enemy, the arrival of a strange dog was required to be reported to the military authorities. If one proved to be harmless and useful, he was sometimes licensed to a peasant woman who was willing to assume responsibility for him.

The appeal to self-interest always had the best chance of success, but it was never to be predicted what curious twist malignancy might give to any German decision. Besides, most of the usual tax of ten francs would have to be borrowed, sou by sou, of neighbors, and repaid with incredible privations. And with these matters arranged she must still secure the official permit to fetch the dog-bread from Lille, for the smallest, unauthorized package could not be taken from one place to another.

Scant allowance of time was given for private grief, and with a brutal calculation every religious feeling of the French was outraged, so with indecent haste and no pious observances old Gabriel was laid

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away in the village churchyard. The very next morning madame took a barrow-load of salad vegetables around to certain official kitchens, where she was paid nothing, and on her way home stopped at the Hôtel de Ville, the local headquarters of the enemy.

As she steadily refused to explain her errand to a half-dozen abusive guards, she was finally admitted to the office of the *Kommandantatur*. For herself she would never have made the concession of using his title, but for the brave and faithful Poilu, whose life might depend upon her discretion, she sacrificed her pride.

“It is to speak of a vagabond dog, Monsieur le Commandant.”

“Ah! One of those who come in under the wires, perhaps. Be seated, dear madame, and give an account of the animal.”

She was bewildered and frightened by this sinister courtesy, as she had never heard of this type of dark, slender, suave Prussian, who speaks a perfect French and assumes a French urbanity in order to trap the unwary and give the last touch of refinement to cruelty. The color fled from

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her face, leaving her blanched and staring, but she spoke with composure and she remained standing.

"Monsieur le Commandant, he appeared in the night. It is true that he has scratches and wounds of combat." Under an appearance of candor, her information was of the scantest, and her wide gesture both disclaimed responsibility and implied the universe out of which that unaccountable dog had come. It was most excellent comedy, rooted in tragedy, a thing to move any French audience to laughter and tears. "He is not a *chien* one would buy in ordinary times. But he is young and strong and no doubt willing enough, and in these days—" Hands and eyebrows and shoulders expressed a philosophic acceptance of conditions. With no personal interest that was apparent, she presented the case as a business proposition which was altogether to the profit of Germany.

He appeared to be charmed with the arrangement, and with madame herself. Filling out the permit to fetch the dog-bread from Lille, he said, "If you will trouble yourself to stop at the proper

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bureau on your way out, dear madame, this will be viséd on the payment of the tax of forty francs.”

Forty francs in that starving land! He knew that she had not forty sous in the world. It was a death sentence for Poilu!

Her face went as blank as a sheet of paper, but she stood perfectly still while he lighted a cigarette and regarded her with the satyr smile made popular in German court circles by the Crown Prince. He regretted that her house and person would have to be searched. If incriminating papers were found she would be deported. And in any case, if the tax were not paid within twenty-four hours the dog would be shot.

She laid the permit on the table, and made her exit in silence and perfect composure, but in the dark corridor she leaned for support against the wall, with such wild, distracting thoughts as must unbalance the mind. Pulling herself sharply together and holding her head high, she went down the steps into the sunny square of the Hôtel de Ville, to be robbed of the

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small sum which was to have paid for her day's ration of bread.

Two large heads of lettuce, which, at their crisp, white hearts were as solid as little cabbages, had been left in her barrow when she had completed her deliveries, and these it was her privilege to sell in the market at a fixed price. Now an officer, attended by a military servant with a basket, appropriated the vegetables, and in payment offered her a German pfennig, whose value is a quarter of a cent.

“The price for the two is ten sous, monsieur,” she said, politely.

“The price to a German officer is anything he chooses to pay,” he replied, with cold contempt.

She let the copper coin slip through her fingers to the ground. “Monsieur, I present the salad to you with my compliments.”

There was nothing in her manner to which he could take exception, but her bland smile made him flush with an obscure resentment.

“As you please,” he said, stiffly, and through his servant he retrieved the

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money. Picking that all but worthless coin out of the dust, the German soldier polished it on his sleeve and with a salute gave it back to his petty thief of a superior. No French dog could have been beaten into doing so mean a thing. The man was a degraded slave who willingly served a criminal master. The German people had lost their souls.

When she reached home madame brought out the cooking-pot in which the flag, the letters and photographs, and Poilu's collar of honor were hidden. Sealing the heavy iron lid with a cement of ashes and clay, she buried the pot deep under a corner of the potato-field. Then she considered the fate of the devoted dog.

If he could have been made to understand his peril she would have driven him from home, on the chance of his making his way back to the French lines. But since that was impossible, she was determined that he should not be tied up and shot by a *boche*, who was capable of bungling to prolong the torture. His look of agonized fright, and of wild reproach at her, would haunt her forever. In some



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way of kindness she must kill him herself. But not until nightfall did a method occur to her.

First Poilu should have a long, happy evening—his welcome home. Calling him up from the cellar, in which he had fretted for liberty and grown gaunt and discouraged on scanty fare, she talked to him with the old animation while she broke up the door to the lavatory and built a cheerful fire. Then, with vegetables, a half-litre of milk, and *grandpère's* unused rations of bacon and rice, she made a delicious cream soup. Into Poilu's basin she crumbled all the bread in the house.

These had been sad, bewildering days to a dog who was conscious of nothing but good intentions and a heart of yearning love. Now, this satisfying meal and the restoration to normal living and warm, human companionship so delighted and reassured Poilu that he sprawled in blissful content at his mistress's feet. Madame sat on a milking-stool, reknitting the ball of raveled yarn which she kept for such spiritual emergencies, while the dog lay stretched on the hearth, now lolling his

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tongue and wagging his docked tail; now with his muzzle on his paws, blinking at the fire; now rubbing his huge head against her gown, begging for a caress.

Madame timed herself now by the military trains which rumbled across the dreary landscape. The sun had set in splendor on the plain of Flanders, and there was still a glow in the western sky, with the long, northern twilight advancing out of the darkening east, when she rose at eight o'clock. Leaving Poilu in a happy, dreaming doze on the hearth, she descended to the cellar. There she filled the brazier of the charcoal-stove from the small bag of fuel. Fetching it up-stairs, she carried it out to the hedge. From the yard of a neighbor she had already brought an old dog-house, from which the floor had been wrenched away and burned, and set it up under a blossoming pear tree.

With a joyous woofing Poilu bounded beside her when she led him out, as though to his old duty of guarding the stable-yard. Pushing through the low door, he turned around and around in these familiar quarters, and settled down. When she

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bade him good night and reached in to pat his head, he licked her hand in eager gratitude. In a half-hour, when he was sound asleep, she lighted the charcoal and, setting the little stove before the opening of the dog-house, she enveloped both in a thick, old bed-covering to keep in the fumes.

Often on a bright, still evening such as this, madame fancied that she could hear vesper bells. Then, standing in the glowing dusk, she told her beads, gathering strength to wait and endure at every mystic station of the Cross. Now, in spirit, knowing the hour, she joined Victor at prayer in the parish church in London. With him she lighted a taper and set it on the altar, and lifting her eyes to the Mother of God, she prayed in serene faith for the good French and British and American soldiers to come to the rescue of the perishing people of Roubaix.

When the coals were burned to embers she carried the coverlet, the stove, and the dog-house away. She must let Poilu lie there, for the inspection of the firing-squad and search-party that would come out in the morning. They would discover

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nothing more than that he had died suddenly. Then she would bury him, on this grassy bank overlooking the fields which he had tilled and guarded. And when the war was over he, too, should have the headstone of a brave soldier who had fallen for France.

Madame stooped and stroked his motionless head and lifted a cold, limp paw. “*Bon soir, Poilu,*” she said. “Rest well, *mon brave.*” The white petals of the pear blossoms were drifting down on a chill wind from the sea when she went away quietly, leaving him curled up, as though asleep.

THE END

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